LIBERTINISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE,

1650 - 1700

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"Pleasure . . . is a dirty word in a Christian culture. Pleasure is Satan's word." (Lenny Bruce)

ABSTRACT

My thesis concerns libertine ideals of pleasure in English literature from the time of the Interregnum until about 1700. Restoration comedy is omitted from the study, and so are such subsidiary libertine ideals as wit and honour. Libertinism has a religious and an irreligious phase, and the transition from one to the other occurs during the period studied. The Ranters in 1650 were anarchic spiritual libertines similar to the heretics of the middle ages. They represent an extreme form of that chiliastic enthusiasm which was for a short while strong in the English Commonwealth. After the Restoration, libertinism became the predominant aristocratic code, especially from 1665 to 1680, but the reaction against it was already under way by the time the Society for the Reformation of Manners was formed in 1689. The story, then, is broadly that of the rise and decline of libertinism during the period. By the turn of the century it was changing in character, becoming more consciously atheistic.

The first Chapter describes libertinism in its religious phase, from the early Christian era until its death in Cromwell's England. Chapter II traces the origins of libertinism in its sceptical and naturalistic aspects from Montaigne and the French libertin poets and esprits forts, and shows the French influence on Restoration society. The Don Juan theme is examined in plays by Molière and Shadwell, and the iconoclastic libertine "heroes" of Lee and Otway

are also briefly looked at. Some attempt is made to assess how far the libertine's determinist philosophy is derived from Hobbes. The third Chapter deals with various types of Epicurean approaches to happiness - particularly the refined Epicureanism of St. Evremond, Cowley and Temple. Dryden's translations are seen to set the tone for the erotic poetry of Aphra Behn and others. Wycherley's poems praising solitude and retirement provide a link with the satirists who form the bulk of the last two Chapters. Chapter IV deals with the Court Wits, selecting Rochester, Etherege and Sedley for detailed study. In the fifth Chapter, Oldham and various minor satirists are seen to follow Rochester's example in making libertine themes the subject of their satires. The conclusion briefly indicates the way in which libertine themes are important in the eighteenth century.

PREFACE

This work evolved from my M.A. dissertation, "The Notorious Colonel Charteris", a study of an eighteenth century rake whom the Augustan satirists used as an exemplum of vice. Having started from the milieu in which Charteris operated, I felt the need to clarify it by reference to an earlier period, when the libertine ideal had not been degraded to the point of bestiality represented by Charteris. Hence the research covers mainly the Restoration and late seventeenth century, although to strengthen its validity some reference to the earlier seventeenth century and also to the eighteenth century was necessary.

Limitations of time and space meant that only the libertine ideal of pleasure could be studied fully. While this is what most readers would readily think of as being quintessentially libertine, there are additional ideals, and I hope that my research will enable other students of the period to appreciate and pursue further some of the other constituents of libertinism, such as wit and honour. I have had to omit scepticism and to some extent naturalism, for the same reason, as being also too wide. Therefore in a sense this piece of work is only a start, and plenty remains to be done on the subject. I make no apology for including much that is of very minor literary merit, to the exclusion of extended discussion of some major poets, notably Dryden. Only in this way can the great poets be properly appreciated, and another scholar will no doubt rectify my omissions.

This work is a synthesis, and so does not often say strikingly original things. The extensive reading necessary for such a broad survey has meant that each chapter has tended to be built around one or two key sources. In order to reduce excessive footnoting I have made a blanket acknowledgement in some cases. With this proviso, however, all statements other than platitudes are my own.

I owe an inestimable debt of gratitude to my wife, Lucy, without whose support and encouragement the work would never have been completed. My sister, Rona, has saved us hours of frustration by typing the thesis. I am eternally grateful. The role of my supervisor, Frank Doherty, has been still more important. He has never failed to provide inspiration when it has been most needed, and I have always found my failing genial spirits replenished by an hour in his company. I extend my thanks also to Roger Pooley for reading my first Chapter, which covers an area not in my major field of interest. Finally, a word of thanks to the staff of the Libraries of Keele, Leicester and Cambridge Universities, who in their different ways have helped to make life easier.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSPD	Calendar of State Papers Domestic
DNB	Dictionary of National Biography
EIC	Essays in Criticism
ELH	ELH, A Journal of English Literary History
HLQ	Huntington Library Quarterly
HMC	Historical Manuscript Commission Reports
JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
MLN	Modern Language Notes
MLQ	Modern Language Quarterly
MP	Modern Philology
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
POAS	Poems on Affairs of State (Yale edition, 1963)
PQ	Philological Quarterly
RES	Review of English Studies
RLC	Revue de littérature comparée
SP	Studies in Philology
TLS	(London) Times Literary Supplement

INTRODUCTION

Libertinism has two aspects: freedom of thought in religion, and moral laxity. Both are characterised by an aberration from the orthodox position of the church, the former in terms of ideas, the latter from the point of view of behaviour. Each aspect is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for libertinism. Free thought which does not result in immoral behaviour will not concern me; neither will licentiousness which is accompanied by no theoretical justification. One belongs to the realm of "pure" ideas, the other to that of "pure" biography. My method will rather be to elucidate and draw on both these areas. In all the important manifestations of libertinism they are in fact closely related.

There are also two phases in the history of libertinism. (The pre-Christian era is excluded from this study, although libertines were often compared to debauchees of the ancient world, such as Nero.) From its beginnings in early Christianity, through the earlier part of the seventeenth century, libertinism was a heresy. From the late seventeenth century until it died in the French Revolution it became a more conscious revolt against Christianity itself. Whereas the libertine always defied the eternal punishments which the orthodox said would follow his blasphemies or actions, in this later period his defiance tended to involve a more systematic denial that such punishments existed. The Restoration marks the crucial stage in this transition. It is therefore essential to view the years immediately preceding it, in order to see the continuity which exists at the level of both ideas and actions, the

contrast being in the motive for them, not in their results. The parallels have hitherto been somewhat obscured, largely owing to the practice, in literary and historical studies, of making rather artificial dichotomies. It is a considerable oversimplification, for example, to imagine that literature changed overnight with Charles II's Restoration, that the Augustan Age was born in 1660. In order to counteract such assumptions, I have included both phases of libertinism in this study, instead of starting at the Restoration and ignoring what went before. I hope that the fresh insights which this method might reveal will compensate for the flaws resulting from it: the thesis is rather off-balance (about four parts to one in favour of post-1660 libertines); and its emphasis changes from a predominantly historical one in the first part to one in subsequent chapters where the shifting centres of gravity are primarily literary.

The purpose of my first Chapter is partly to demonstrate that libertinism in its religious phase, particularly as it manifested itself under the Commonwealth, had a continuous underground existence from at least the Middle Ages. More important, I want to show that, despite their completely different premises, the behaviour of libertines in the religious phase was often indistinguishable from that of Restoration rakes, who professed not to heed the warnings of the orthodox, but were not yet ready for the more systematic atheism which their successors would propound. This parallel is my main criterion for judging the relevance of the material on the early libertines. Although in many cases the writings are themselves of sufficient interest to be included on their own merit, I have resisted the temptation to reproduce material simply because

it has not been widely available. Instead I have sought to redress the balance slightly in favour of the sectaries, who, notwithstanding Milton's little-known defences of them, suffered unfairly at the hands of both Royalist satirists (such as Butler) and orthodox Puritans (such as Bunyan). In this way, the first Chapter should also provide the background for a better appreciation of the varied talents of Milton, Bunyan and Butler.

Chapter II identifies the mainly French origins of the naturalistic and sceptical aspects of libertinism, and describes their introduction into Restoration court society. It goes on to compare the libertine elements in a French and an English play on the Don Juan theme, Molière's Dom Juan and Shadwell's The Libertine. The latter in particular embodies all the strands of Restoration libertinism. Some of them are traced to their origins and briefly discussed. From this process it is clear that a full treatment would require a much longer study. For similar reasons it is necessary to restrict the discussion of the libertine's positive ideals to the varying conceptions of pleasure during the period, and to exclude almost entirely the subsidiary libertine ideals of wit and honour.

I have chosen Epicureanism as the most representative concept to examine in more detail in Chapter III. Its growth from the 1650's onwards reaches a peak in the Restoration period, and its decline later in the century coincides with the rise of deism, a wider form of heterodoxy, and the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, a reaction against the Restoration's era of excess. Though the other strands survive in altered forms, Epicureanism, perhaps the most characteristic element of Restoration libertinism, dies out completely in the early years of the eighteenth century. Its rise and fall, encompassing a period of about seventy years, neatly

encapsulates the rise and fall of libertinism, which is very broadly the story that this thesis tells. The chapter on Epicureanism has a significant connection with the account of enthusiasm in the first Chapter, since just as there is a parallel between the language of enthusiasm and the "religion" of the Restoration libertine, so the enthusiastic mysticism of poets such as Vaughan and Marvell gradually becomes transformed into the celebration of more earthly delights in Epicurean poetry after the Restoration. Abraham Cowley is crucial in this transition. Other representative refined Epicureans studied include St. Evremond, and Sir William Temple, the last great aristocratic exponent of the philosophy of retirement. Dryden's translations of Lucretius and other classical poets reflect the more hedonistic emphasis in some treatments of the theme.

Chapter IV describes the heyday of libertinism as it is reflected in the lives and writings of the Court Wits, a true coterie which had a tremendous influence on literature for a period of about fifteen years. Rochester is the archetypal libertine, the paradigm case of libertinism in thought and action. His heirs in the remainder of the century, such as Oldham and various lesser imitators, are examined, and their significance, particularly with reference to the development of satire, is noted. The decline of libertinism after Rochester's death is traced in the subsequent careers of the surviving members of the circle of the Court Wits. Etherege, exceptional amongst libertines in persisting in his libertinism long after most of his fellow rakes had reformed, cuts the sorriest figure; but Sedley's lapse into sentimentalism is

hardly much more dignified. The changed moral climate in the later years of the century, with the rise of bourgeois morality, was hostile to the aristocratic libertine ethos. Molière prophesied its doom in Dom Juan, yet it survived in France for well over another century, and Beaumarchais sounded it another death-knell in Le Mariage de Figaro (1780). Sade, who carried libertinism to its grotesque ultimate conclusion, was, fittingly enough, its last great victim.

An important justification for this study of libertinism is that it should lead to a better appreciation of some of the major poets of this and subsequent periods, although that need not always entail particular study of those authors themselves. Dryden was not an aristocrat, but there is a sense in which his career parallels that of the libertine and finally transcends it. His early work for the stage is, like Shadwell's, a reflection of popular taste. The libertine elements in his comedies are obvious enough. The songs scattered throughout them are as wanton as the lyrics of the Court Wits. The comedies express directly that disillusion which distinguishes the public life of 1660 and after from that of twenty years earlier. The other side to this coin is what Bonamy Dobrée calls the "necessity for heroism",[1] which accounts for the popularity of heroic drama (and heroic satire). Dryden's greatness as a poet and satirist owes much to his ability to harness these two opposites in his mature satires. He was indebted to John Oldham, the English Juvenal, for the view of satire as a species of heroic poetry, and, having a better ear, was able to improve on Oldham's versification. He also turned his own spiritual experience into much finer poetry

than any libertine ever did. Yet Religio Laici and The Hind and the Panther are distinguished from the enthusiastic accounts of conversion by Bunyan and others, by their restrained, sceptical tone - the tone which was to dominate poetry for more than a century.

Although Dryden's work displays libertine elements, and while it would be a prodigious oversight not to take cognisance of the writer after whom the age has been named, Dryden does not loom very large in the present thesis. There is certainly a case for a separate study of Dryden in the light of the ideas herein expounded, and I hope that this will materialise in due course. In the meantime, however, I have not felt justified in including much more than the odd paragraph under various headings whose relevance to Dryden is not their main criteria. In other words, Dryden is too major a figure to be summarily cramped into the restrictive pigeon-holes that must perforce be constructed for purposes of simplification in a work like this. What is required is a treatment of the libertine naturalist and Epicurean elements in his intellectual milieu, to supplement the sceptical aspects illuminated by Professor Bredvold.

The thesis concerns libertinism in England from the Interregnum to the end of the seventeenth century. The Ranters may be seen as the culmination of a heterodox undercurrent which had been more or less strong in Western Europe for centuries. Yet although they represent the "last fling" of religious libertinism, their language is frequently echoed in the secular phase, almost invariably for satirical ends. Here the link between Butler in the first Chapter and the various lesser satirists in the last is important. Personal disillusion, or at least scepticism, seems to be a pre-

requisite for satire, but the tone varies from gentle irony to disgusted outrage, according to the degree of detachment which the satirist commands. In general, those whose animus is most extreme tend to be the ones who undergo conversion to a positive faith, whereas the calmer sceptics remain unconvinced. Here the parallels between the lives of libertines in the enthusiastic phase and the rakes' irreligious debauches are often striking. Both hated the hypocrisy which so often discredited middle-class morality, and which was a stock butt of satires on the seventeenth century acquisitive society from Ben Jonson to Samuel Butler, Tom Brown and Daniel Defoe.

CHAPTER 1 LIBERTINISM IN ITS RELIGIOUS PHASE

1 The Heresy of the Free Spirit

Morton Smith has recently described his discovery of a secret version of St Mark's Gospel, which suggests that Christ advocated a form of libertinism (or Christian liberty).[1] More startling is the suggestion that Christ and his disciples indulged in erotic rites, which aroused the hostility of the Roman government, and resulted in Christ's arrest, and the persecution of the early Christians. The libertine elements in Christ's teaching were systematically erased after his death, though Clement of Alexandria and later Carpocrates apparently had access to them, and some aspects of St Paul's life and work suggest an affinity, for example his belief that "All things are pure to the pure". When the "spiritual libertines" of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance expressed identical doctrines they were suppressed, yet this strain in Christianity is similar to the Buddhist idea that sin is only in the estimation of the sinner, and it may well be that Christianity as Christ himself practised it had more in common with the Eastern Asian temperament. In Western literature the theme of love is dominated by the romantic strain, where it remains unrequited. The recognition that sex can provide normal, steady enjoyment, devoid of suffering, is almost totally absent in the post-Christian era. Its association with guilt is the legacy of the Manichean tradition.

The Manicheans were themselves heretics. Bayle tells us that they "sprang up in the third century" and persisted until the thirteenth century, when the Albigensians flourished. He also points out that the doctrine of the two principles, one good and the other evil, is much older than Manes, and then proceeds to show why it is untenable.[2] The importance of the Manicheans lies in the consequences which they drew from their belief in the two principles. They held that man was all bad, and that it was his duty to die out by continence - a belief which was perpetuated among later sects. They agreed that man's greatest sin, and the particular evidence of his fallen state, was his persistent urge to reproduce.

Another early heretic, Pelagius, said that Adam sinned for himself alone. This excluded the idea of original sin, and at the same time the notion that the sexual act was particularly sinful because it transmitted original sin. The liberating implications of this doctrine moved Augustine, who had himself been a Manichean for nine formative years, to propound his anti-Pelagian belief that sex was especially sinful, and that grace and salvation were entirely in the hand of God, and beyond the control of the individual. In this he was the forerunner of Calvin and the Puritans. The true heirs of the Manicheans were the reformed churches, but orthodox Catholicism was also much affected. It was against this austerity and asceticism in Christianity that libertinism, based on a rival conception of the Christian God, revolted.

After Christ himself, the first teacher of Christian libertinism was the second century Alexandrian Carpocrates, whose followers were known as Licentious Gnostics. They were dualists, like the Manicheans, but they considered that the only way to demonstrate their superiority over matter was to commit what more material men called sin. They justified the ensuing promiscuity by a contempt for matter rather than a joy in it (unlike the Pelagians). Thus their motives were similar to the Manicheans', although their actions were indistinguishable from Pagan orgies. Among many sects that Butler satirised in Hudibras were the "ancient Gnostici", whom he called "the most ridiculous sots of all mankind" (I i 539 n).

Despite the efforts of the Inquisition to suppress them, enough writings have survived to show that heresies such as Catharism and the Free Spirit had a wide following in the Middle Ages. Norman Cohn demonstrates how Spiritual Liberty or the Free Spirit played a more important part in the history of Western Europe than the Catharist and Waldensian heresies, about which much more has been written.[3] He shows the importance of eroticism as a sign of spiritual emancipation in the doctrine of the Free Spirit, which, carried by mendicant Beghards and Beguines, had spread over a vast area by the fourteenth century. Adepts of the Free Spirit believed they had achieved such absolute perfection as to be

incapable of sin. These "perfect men" often concluded that it was not only permissible but mandatory to do what was forbidden. In a Christian civilisation, where fornication was considered particularly sinful, this usually meant promiscuity "on principle".

The Brethren of the Free Spirit were distinguished from other heretics of the time by their propensity for setting out to acquire domination over women in order to seduce them. Just what conversion to the Free Spirit entailed for an individual is indicated in this fourteenth century description, probably based on personal observation, of a Beguine reciting her catechism to the heretical Beghard who is her spiritual director:

> When a man has truly reached the great and high knowledge, he is no longer bound to observe any law or any command, for he has become one with God. God created all things to serve such a person, and all that God ever created is the property of such a man ... He shall take from all creatures as much as his nature desires and craves, and shall have no scruples of conscience about it, for all created things are his property ... A man whom all heaven serves, all people and creatures are indeed obliged to serve and to obey; and if any disobeys, it alone is guilty. (p 179)

One of the main uses to which creatures* were to be put was sexual. The adept Johann Hartmann said that just as cattle were created for human use, so women were created to be used by Brethren of the Free Spirit. This argument was sometimes voiced by the more iconoclastic of Restoration libertines, but

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*The emphasis is mine. The term "creature", with an added sense, was much in evidence when the Free Spirit later manifested itself in the antinomian writings of Cromwell's England. (See p. 31below).

they had no use for these religious libertines' claim that a woman became more chaste by intimacy with them, to the extent that she thereby even regained a previously lost virginity.

Cohn describes how the doctrine of the Free Spirit was elaborated into an all-embracing theological and philosophical system, which he calls Amaurianism - after Amaury de Bène, who was burned for heresy early in the thirteenth century. The heretical view of Satan in Paradise Lost that "The mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (I, 254-5) is derived from Amaury[4], and Satan's boast has its wider roots in the interpretation of Christ's teaching that "the kingdom of God is within you" by Jacob Boehme and his followers as meaning that "we have heaven and hell in ourselves".[5] Boehme's mysticism was an important link between the ideas of the medieval Brethren of the Free Spirit and the religious libertines of the English Commonwealth.* The Amaurians' self-exaltation, in claiming to be God, characteristically expressed itself in extreme libertine behaviour. According to William the Breton, they:

> committed rapes and adulteries and other acts which give pleasure to the body. And to the women with whom they sinned, and to the simple people whom they deceived, they promised that sins would not be punished. (p 156)

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*See p.35 below

In practice, their doctrine, like that of the Court Wits, was the basis for a thoroughly élitist system. The Brethren of the Free Spirit divided humanity into the majority, the "crude in spirit", who failed to develop their divine potentialities, and themselves, who were the "subtle in spirit". They claimed further that total and permanent absorption into God, which was possible for others only after death, and which would be possible for the universe only at the end of time, was obtained by the "subtle in spirit" already during their life on earth. This was very different from legitimate Catholic mysticism, where the mystic did not as a result of his experience shed his human condition, but was obliged to live out his life on earth as an ordinary mortal. The heretical mystic, on the other hand, felt himself to be completely transformed: he had been united with God, he was identical with God, and in some cases he even claimed to have surpassed God, to have no further need of God.

For adepts of the Free Spirit, proof of salvation was to know neither conscience nor remorse, and the complete amoralism which resulted is what distinguishes them from all other medieval sectarians. The Confession of John of Brünn anticipates the rant of certain Restoration libertines:

> A man who has a conscience is himself Devil and hell and purgatory, tormenting himself. He who is free in spirit escapes from all these things ... I belong to the Liberty of Nature, and all that my nature desires I satisfy ... I am a natural man. (pp. 177-8)

The last two sentences are indistinguishable from the arguments of Shadwell's Don John.* Even the religious terminology was

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*See below, Chapter II, pp.91-2.

ironically used by some Restoration libertines. But the sincerity of the belief of another adept, Albertus Magnus, that "Nothing is sin except what is thought of as sin" (p 178), more directly anticipates the Ranters.* The complete licence which such extreme antinomianism gave is indicated in this passage from the Confession of Johann Hartmann, which adumbrates the Restoration Neros and Don Johns:

> It would be better that the whole world should be destroyed and perish utterly than that a free man should refrain from one act to which his nature moves him ... The free man is quite right to do whatever gives him pleasure. (p 178)

The deterministic argument that "his nature moves him" to perform what lesser men call crimes was resurrected by the Restoration libertine.

Even as early as the twelfth century quite a large element in the motive for libertines was provided by a desire to shock what they considered an oppressive and sanctimonious, if not positively misguided, priesthood. Thus Arnold and his eleven followers, who were burnt at Cologne in 1163, regarded the entire clergy as deceivers of souls and tools of the Devil. Accordingly they laughed at all doctrine, sacraments, ritual and discipline of the Church, never entered a church or listened to a sermon, and mocked and insulted the Eucharist. They claimed, however, that they alone possessed the true faith and formed the true Church of God, and that any not of their sect were heretics doomed to eternal damnation.

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*The views of Albertus Magnus also find expression in <u>Paradise Lost</u> (IV, 744) - see p. 16 below.

Since they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they were pure and free from sin, so that whatever they did could not be sin. In particular, they could have sexual intercourse with any person, in any manner they chose.[6]

This view that for the "subtle in Spirit" sexual intercourse cannot under any circumstances be wrong characterised numerous sects right down to the Ranters. Indeed, one of the surest signs of the "subtle in spirit" was deemed to be precisely their ability to indulge in promiscuity without fear of divine vengeance or qualms of conscience. Adultery had a special symbolic value for all sects in this affirmation of spiritual emancipation. The followers of the early twelfth century mystic Tanchelm, who, like Arnold, insisted on the importance of eroticism as a sign of emancipation, regarded their leader as their living god.

Some adepts assigned a transcendental, quasi-mystical quality to the sex act when performed by them. The fifteenth century Low Countries sect known as the Homines intelligentiae (intelligentia being, in the terminology of medieval mysticism, that highest faculty of the soul which makes mystical ecstasy possible) called the act "the delight of Paradise" and "the acclivity", the latter being the term for the ascent to mystical ecstasy. The German "Blood Friends" of about 1550 regarded it as a sacrament, which they called "christerie". This seems to be a resurgence of the practice which St Paul condemned, of taking

the love feast of the holy communion one stage further than eating together. In the same way, the Ranter Abiezer Coppe assigned a special significance to fornication, in the belief that love between mortals was the emblem of divine love.

Such elements sometimes expressed themselves in a kind of sexual primitivism, forming part of an elaborate Adam-cult, which amounted to an assertion that the participants were restored to the state of innocence which had existed before the Fall. To be naked and unashamed, like Adam and Eve, was regarded as an essential part of the state of perfection on earth. Milton's Paradise includes a denunciation of "guilty shame" (IV, 313-5) and a paean to "the Rites/Mysterious of connubial love" (IV, 737-70).[7] The leader of the Homines intelligentiae claimed to be able to perform the sex act in the same special way as it was practised by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. At the same time he said he was the Saviour whose mission it was to inaugurate the Third and Last Age - a doctrine later preached by Muggleton and his followers. This combination of such apparently disparate activities was not uncommon. An adept at Eichstätt in 1391 proclaimed himself as a second Adam who, instead of Christ, was going to establish the Third and Last Age in the form of an earthly Paradise which would last until it was lifted up to Heaven. The Spiritual Libertines whom Calvin denounced declared they had found the way back to the state that Adam enjoyed before he had tasted of the knowledge of good and evil; and also that they were living in the Last Days, when the Christian dispensation was to be replaced

by a new and higher one. There is some similarity between these examples and certain forms of primitivism which one encounters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the millenarian enthusiasm of the Civil War period produced further instances.

Although the Reformation marked an increase in Christian freedom, the doctrine of spiritual liberty of that era, essentially the old doctrine of the Free Spirit, was as horrifying to Reformers as to Catholics. Luther and the Catholic Inquisition together impeded the growth of the movement, but they cound not permanently prevent it. The two main proponents of the doctrine, both first heard of in 1525, provoked attacks from Luther and Calvin respectively. Loy Pruystinck, an illiterate slater from Antwerp, had built up a wide following in Brabant and Flanders by the time he was burnt to death on a slow fire in 1544. Five of his disciples were beheaded, but others fled, significantly, to England. The followers of the tailor Quintin were more worthy of the charges of antinomianism that were brought against Pruystinck, having apparently inherited all the anarchism of the medieval Brethren of the Free Spirit. By 1535 Quintin had moved from his native Hainaut to Paris, where Calvin denounced him after engaging in public disputation. Having been dismissed from the Court of Margaret of Navarre on Calvin's advice, he was back in his homeland by 1547, and was finally burnt in that year as a result of attempting to seduce a number of respectable Tournai ladies. Calvin estimated the number of Quintin's converts in Tournai and

Valenciennes at 10,000.[8] As a result of Calvin's polemics the heresy disappeared, or at least went underground, in those regions which had been its stronghold for so long, and at the same time collapsed in central Germany, its other great centre.

It was in Germany that the most spectacular manifestation of extreme antinomian enthusiasm in the sixteenth century occurred. The Anabaptist "New Jerusalem" at Münster finally collapsed, after a long siege, in 1535. The event[9] served as an exemplum for subsequent generations. The surviving leaders, including John Bockelson (John of Leyden) and Bernt Knipperdollinck, were tortured to death in January 1536. Butler mentions both men by name in his Characters. The recent memory of Thomas Venner's attempt to set up the Fifth Monarchy in the streets of London in January 1661 with about fifty followers, thirteen of whom were later executed, prompted Butler to characterise John of Leyden in "A Fifth-Monarchy-Man" as:

> the first Founder of it, and though he miscarried ... his Posterity have Revelations every full Moon, that there may be a Time to set up his Title again, and with better Success; though his Brethren, that have attempted it since, had no sooner quartered his Coat with their own, but their whole outward Men were set on the Gates of the City; where a Head and four Quarters stand as Types and Figures of the fifth-Monarchy.[10]

Paradise Regained has been described, "with considerable oversimplification", as anti-Fifth Monarchist,[11] proof enough that the sect's ideas were taken seriously. John of Leyden features in the "Digression Concerning Madness" in Swift's Tale of a Tub. Together with David George, the Dutch Anabaptist

founder of the Family of Love, plus the Sweet Singers of Israel (whom Bunyan attacked) and other Enthusiasts, he also has a place in the "history of fanaticism" in The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit.[12]

2 The Ranters and other sects

In England also, the history of libertinism in its religious phase is to a great extent bound up with that of the various antinomian sects. One of the most important, the Family of Love, which dates from the 1570's, displays many of the characteristics of mid-seventeenth century sectarianism; particularly, the low social status of its adherents; and high claims as to either the efficacy of human volition for the attainment of salvation, or the possibility of being raised beyong the limits of necessary imperfection. The Familists held the latter:

> Christ doth not signifie any one person, but a qualitie whereof many are partakers, that to be raised is nothing else but to be regenerated or imbued with the said quality.[13]

Once the regeneration has taken place:

> We, the Elders of the holy understanding shall reign upon the earth in righteousnesse and under the obedience of loue, judge the world with equitie.[14]

Like the Brethren of the Free Spirit before them and the Ranters later, Familists believed that perfection is attainable in this life. On the economic front, we are told that most of their tenets "tended to slothfulness, and quench all endeavour in the creature"[15] They can thus be seen, like the Ranters, as rejecting the incipient middle-class work ethic for something akin to the aristocracy's attitude to leisure.

Christopher Hill shows that "Familism, so often accused of begetting Seekers and Ranters, had a continuous underground existence from Elizabeth's reign".[16] Familists were denounced by name from time to time. One adversary, for example, accused them of adoring "Saints Ovid, Priapus, Cupid".[17] With the addition of the epithets Hobbist and Epicure, this could be substituted for most attacks on the Restoration libertine. Butler, with greater subtlety, ironically characterises "A Bawd" as "a superintendent of the family of love" (pp. 320-1). Milton, however, said in their defence that "the Primitive Christians in their times were accounted such as are now call'd Familists and Adamites, or worse".[18] The Family of Love aimed at the cultivation of a state of perfection through mystical endeavour. Such ideas were formulated by Henry Niclaes, the Familist and antinomian writer, whose works were published in English in 1646 by Giles Calvert, the publisher of the Ranters and other radical prophets. Although the Family of Love ceased to exist as a separate movement after about 1630, its central principles found other exponents: for example, the followers of Roger Brearley, curate of Grindleton in Yorkshire, were called "the Grindletonian Familists".[19]

A friend of Brearley's was John Everard, the Cambridge D.D., who was also for a long time an Anglican clergyman. Everard's writings, although they could not be published until after 1640, circulated in manuscript, and did much to establish the principle of free grace. Basically a reaction against the Calvinist doctrine

of the elect, it argued that all men were free and equal before Christ, and that therefore all were capable of salvation. This idea, with its far-reaching political implications, had wide support in the Army in the years 1645-6. Everard translated mystical works by Sebastian Franck, Hans Denck and Nicholas of Cusa. His teachings were echoed by John Eaton and Tobias Crisp.[20] Eaton, who was later known as the founder of the English sect actually called the Antinomians, subordinated everything to a faith in the belief that Christ had taken away one's sins.

The number of court cases in the early 1630's[21] shows the growth of antinomian sects at that time. The antisectarian commissions of 1634 and 1636 enumerate "sundry sorts of separatists and sectaries, as namely Brownists, Anabaptists, Arians, T[raskite]s, Familists, Sensualists, Antinomians and others".[22] After the breakdown of press censorship and ecclesiastical authority in 1640 the number of antinomian publications vastly increased. Their combination of a doctrine of mystical perfectionism and their accent on expressing theological beliefs in action appealed to a growing section of the population, which was neglected by the traditional religious and political structure. Milton was associated with these radical elements.[23]

In particular, antinomianism appealed to the armies of the Civil Wars, in which many sectarians, including the Ranters Bauthumley, Clarkson, Coppe and Salmon, served their apprenticeship. Thousands of their followers must have shared similar experiences, hopes and loyalties. The Army radicals' great contribution was to

expose to the masses what had previously been the mysteries and secrets of government. The Royalist propagandist Bruno Ryves characterised the principles of the lower classes at Chelmsford at the start of the Civil War quite accurately when he remarked contemptuously: "God hath now opened their eyes and discovered unto them their Christian liberty".[24] This phrase*, which was also used ironically of the Restoration libertine, expresses the way in which politics and religion were inextricably linked in the seventeenth century. Another Royalist, Samuel Butler, was to use it to associate a broad religious persuasion with a group of fanatics whom all respectable people could agree to condemn:

> A Latitudinarian ... is but a kind of a modest Ranter, that believes Christian liberty and natural liberty may very well consist together; ... and natural liberty being of the elder House, if there be any Precedency, ought to have a Right to it. (p 118).

The concept of Christian liberty was central to arguments about practical morality in the latter half of the century, and many attacks on libertinism were really criticising Christian heterodoxy. For example, Thomas Blount, in Glossographia (1658) defines libertinism as:

> Licentiousness, Epicurism. In Divinity it is thus defined. Libertinism is nothing else but a false liberty of belief and manners, which will have no other dependance but on particular fancy and passion.[25]

Protestantism had abolished priests in favour of conscience. But it emphasised the separation of the elect from the unregenerate mass, who suffered the full social consequences of the Fall. The

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*One of the best expositions of the heterodox and revolutionary implications of this idea is Chapter 27 of Milton's Christian Doctrine, which follows St Paul, and urges obedience to the spirit rather than the letter of the law.

Fall was vital to politics so long as Church and State were one, because if the individual could set up his own conscience against priest and Church, by the same token he could set himself up against the Government, with which the Church was intimately associated. Luther himself therefore put forward a dual standard in religious teaching: the Gospel for the godly, the law for the ungodly (that is, the multitude). Sixteenth century Protestantism was a revolutionary creed, in that Luther and his supporters would fight and die rather than submit to the Pope or popish secular power. But it was not a democratic creed: it proclaimed Christian liberty, or liberty only for the elect.

In the same way, the Restoration libertines were part of a secular élite, the aristocracy. Butler satirises their excesses too in his Characters, notably in his caricature of Buckingham, "A Duke of Bucks" (pp. 66-7). Sometimes he describes their failings in the language which was applied to the sectaries. "A Degenerate Noble"* for example, is "like a Fanatic, that contents himself with the mere Title of a Saint, and makes that his Privilege to act all manner of Wickedness" (p. 68); while "A Fanatic" is one who "carries his Vices in his Heart, and his Religion in his Face" (p. 128). Butler is not attacking the nobility or the sectaries as such. His prime target is hypocrisy, in whatever class. Thus "A Modern Statesman Owns his Election from Free-Grace in Opposition to Merits or any Foresight of good Works" (p. 64).

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*In the first sixty lines of Virgidemiae, third satire of the fourth book, on the degenerate noble's lineage and ancestry, Hall updates the noble in Juvenal's Satire VIII, from which the lines are imitated. Just as Hall's noble had included Elizabethan circumstances, so Butler's reflects the preoccupations of his age. It should also be said that Butler is utilising for his own ends the widespread hostility to the Puritans after the Restoration, when they were considered legitimate butts for universal ridicule.

The early Puritans were Calvinists, believing in predestination, and stressing that only a chosen few (the elect) would be saved, the majority being damned. The orthodox position was that of the English and Scottish Presbyterians. They anticipated Hobbes in arguing that it was the function of civil government to restrain the depravity natural to all men. Such a view was in fact widespread, and by no means restricted to Presbyterians. For example, Filmer, a principal opponent of Hobbes, said: "a natural freedom of mankind cannot be supposed without a denial of the creation of Adam", and so "the bringing in of atheism".[26] By the end of the Civil Wars there was a strong body of anti-Calvinist opinion. Many, notably the Seekers, concluded that God was not to be found in existing institutions, and looked elsewhere. But the real opposition was provided by the rise of antinomianism, which Hill calls "Calvinism's lower-class alter ego".[27]

The Levellers extended the democratic implication of the sects into the political sphere. They claimed that all freeborn Englishmen had a birthright, inherited from their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, of which it was wrong to deprive them. In this way, civil liberty for all subjects was complementary to Christian liberty, offered freely to all men by the love and grace of God. The Levellers proposed a covenant, An Agreement of the People, to guarantee the people's fundamental democratic rights and liberties. The covenant was a familiar idea among the advanced sects, but its extension into the political sphere was revolutionary.

Whereas the Church covenant was divisive and exclusive, An Agreement was inclusive, uniting a whole people.

The Presbyterian attempt to impose a stern code of moral behaviour on the godless and unregenerate masses only had the effect of strengthening anti-clerical feeling among the lower classes, and it may also have stimulated that antinomian rejection of the bondage of the moral law which became with some Ranters a rejection of all traditional moral restraints. When ordinary people formed their own congregations in the 1640's, free from traditional clerical control, it was not long before lower class sectaries became convinced that they were the elect. For Milton, among others, the elect were to be free from all restraints, including the marriage bond,[28] and coercion was to be applied only to the unregenerate. The London tradesman who had said in 1549 that a man regenerate could not sin[29] would have been far from an isolated figure in England in the 1640's.

The doctrines of John Saltmarsh are characteristic of this tendency. They first found expression in Free Grace: or the Flowing of Christ's Blood freely to Sinners, in December 1645. Saltmarsh rejects the Calvinist doctrine of election, which reserves salvation for a minority. He says that the grace of God is free to all, and that it offers freedom from the bondage of the moral law in this world, as well as salvation in the next. He denies that this leads to "looseness and libertinism",[30] and is careful to distinguish his doctrine from that of those who made God's grace an excuse for sin, as some extreme antinomians were doing. His

radical ideas on the payment of tithes (a central issue in the anti-clerical revolt) and on religious liberty did no more to endear him to the Presbyterians than did his doctrine of free grace. He was denounced by Samuel Rutherford and other divines as a Familist, Antinomian and Libertine.[31]

There were tendencies in orthodox Puritanism which pointed in the direction of free grace, notably the belief that the elect knew by their own experience, or the self-sufficiency of inward revelation - the "inward light" ridiculed in Hudibras (e.g. I i 573, I iii 1162) and in Butler's Characters (pp. 162, 201). This idea was behind Tobias Crisp's boast that: "To be called a Libertine is the most glorious title under heaven".[32] In the Preface to Crisp's book Robert Lancaster had repudiated "those slanderous and calumnious imputations of Antinomianism and Libertinisme in doctrine, and of loosenesse and licentiousnesse in conversation ...".[33] Allegorical writing such as Crisp's was harmless enough in normal times, but in the revolutionary atmosphere of the Civil Wars some of the lower classes began to take it literally, interpreting sin as Christ moving in them.

The result of the breakdown of confidence in established forms of religion, particularly in London and the Army, was described by Thomas Edwards, the hammer of the sects: "many leave the congregations of the Independents and Anabaptists, and fall to Seekers, and not only people, but ministers also".[34] As this implies, Seeking appealed to the more educated part of the population. The Seekers rejected all sects, and all organised worship. Although they refused to be bound by a code whose sanctions lay outside its

subject's consciousness, their attitude to the laws imposed by society was quietist.* They were carried along by the millenarian enthusiasm of the 1640's, but the more settled climate of the 1650's was much less favourable for them, and they soon became disillusioned. They therefore turned away from an age in which they found "no such (visible) apostolic gifts and so dared not meddle with any outward administrations".[35] They considered it "a poor carnall thing for Saints to stand brangling with the World for a few carnall enjoyments",[36] since they believed that everything would be given to them in God.

The Ranters, however, appealed primarily to the uneducated of that class which Bunyan, describing his own family, called "a low and inconsiderable generation, ... of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land".[37] In contrast to the Seekers, they stressed action. They believed that God existed in all things, but since man alone could be conscious of his Godhead this gave all men a new and equal dignity: the poorest beggars were as good as the greatest in the land. The Ranters alone spoke for the lowest classes. Their primitive biblical communism was more menacing to the authorities than that of Winstanley and the Diggers. Like the Diggers, but unlike Lilburne and his followers, they were ready to accept the most radical implications of the name of Leveller. For them, God himself was "the mighty Leveller".[38] It was no accident that the Ranters began to emerge soon after the Independents had defeated the Army Levellers at Burford in May 1649. They seem, indeed, to have attracted many disappointed and embittered former Levellers. Where

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*Milton, following St Paul, conceded that, while we should pursue our liberty in full assurance of faith, not doubting it is permitted, yet we should avoid giving offence to weaker brethren who are bound by the letter of the law (The Christian Doctrine, Works, Columbia edition, XVI, 157-9).

levelling by the sword and the spade had both failed, what seemed called for was a levelling by miracle, where God would overturn the mighty by means of the poorest, lowest and most despised of the earth. The Ranter movement came into sudden prominence towards the end of 1649, reached its peak in 1650, and thereafter survived only in fragments.

The swift rise and uncompromising assertion of the literal implications of antinomianism as propounded by the Ranters can only be explained by the events of 1649. In February the Rump Parliament, purged by Pride in December 1648, executed the King and abolished the Lords. February 1649 saw "the first crystallisation of the Fifth Monarchy idea into a serious political proposition".[39] The Fifth Monarchy Men used the Books of Daniel and Revelation to show the imminent reign of King Jesus on Earth in place of the Stuarts. The King's death, though less important for the Ranters, was an indication to them too that the carnal powers were in retreat. Their social ideas were connected with the progress of the Revolution in England. Thus Joseph Salmon's A Rout, A Rout (10 February 1649), published just after King Charles' execution, applies the three stages of God's manifestation to contemporary events. Abiezer Coppe, who was sympathetic to the Levellers, also envisaged great social upheaval in A Fiery Flying Roll. His behaviour was strikingly similar to that of Loy Pruystinck in Antwerp a century earlier,[40] and he was not acting in isolation. Milton proudly defended regicide in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates on the grounds that "all men naturally were borne free", and to think that Kings were accountable to God alone "were a kinde of treason against the dignitie of mankind to affirm".[41]

The economic and political disruption following the bad harvests of 1647 and 1648 generated a current of popular religious heresy, particularly in London. George Foster (calling himself Jacob Israel) and Thomas Tany (calling himself Theaureau John) independently of one another proclaimed their divine mission to lead the Jews back to the Promised Land. John Robins announced that he was God, and that his wife was about to give birth to a Third Adam, the new Christ. His two disciples, John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton, established themselves in 1651 as twin prophets of Joachim of Fiore's Third Age. In Hampshire, John Franklin convinced many that he was God. Nevertheless, the simultaneous emergence of a number of "gods" and prophets preaching a similar creed does not mean that the Ranters were a distinct set of enthusiasts, like the Quakers. In fact, Ranterism is more accurately characterised as a climate of opinion, which, under the revolutionary pressures of 1650, was able to sustain for a short period the impetus of a loosely co-ordinated campaign.

The Ranters remained a religious movement in so far as their ultimate aim was freedom from the burden of sin, and assurance of divine favour; social justice was an incidental aim. The primary objective of the coming millenium was the elimination of false distinctions of good and evil, so that when this occurred there would be no difference between rich and poor. Both religious and social emancipation would be achieved with the realisation that God's will is revealed in every man's heart, and that the ultimate evil is to ignore the dictates of one's own conscience. George Fox was beginning to attract support in the Midlands for his teaching

that moral regeneration through the workings of the inward spirit was an essential prerequisite for any social progress, since the inequalities of society reflected the imperfect state of man. The Ranters and the Quakers, like Winstanley, were concerned for the weak and the poor, but although Coppe and some others denounced the rich in class terms, essentially the Ranters were anarchic. Coppe agreed with Winstanley's account that Adam's sin, selfishness, led to property, and hence to envy, malice, theft and war.* Clarkson, more militant than Winstanley, was once involved in his movement, which in fact collapsed when Clarkson turned Ranter. Although the Ranters were usually sympathetic to the principles of Winstanley (and others), these principles were not vital to their own programme. There was considerable overlap of ideas between Diggers, Ranters and Quakers. Giles Calvert published all of them, and his shop was a focal point for the radicals.

Winstanley admitted losses to the Ranters, as a result of the suppression of the Diggers' activities, but he was concerned to dissociate his movement from them. To this end he published A Vindication of those, whose Endeavours is only to make the Earth a Common Treasury, called Diggers or, Some Reasons given by them against the immoderate use of creatures or, the excessive community of women, called Ranting; or rather Renting, in February 1650. Here he talks of the debilitating effect of physical pleasure on the

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*The Golden Age was sometimes presented in Adamite terms as a time when property was held in common. Examples can be found in Virgil's Georgics, Spenser's Mother Hubbard's Tale, some of Chapman's poems, and More's Utopia (which also denounces luxury). See Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (1973), pp. 41-5. Cf Chapter II below, pp.98-9. The Diggers' primitivism was "hard", whereas the Ranters' was "soft".

mind and body, and advocates the Digger ideal of hard work as an antidote. But by this time the Diggers had lost momentum, and the initiative had passed to more fanatical prophets. Clarkson distorted Winstanley's cherished principles into a justification for every capricious appetite, and mocked as the greatest barriers to eternity those social values which had been the foundation of the Digger enterprise. Contemporaries were often unable to distinguish between Diggers and Ranters, with some justification. But Winstanley ignores the affinities of Ranter theology with his own, and dismisses "the Ranting practise" as "the resurrection of the uncleane doggish beastly nature ... of the filthy, unrighteouse power in all his branches".[42]

The phrase "the immoderate use of creatures" in the title of Winstanley's tract recalls the language of the Brethren of the Free Spirit.* In the vocabulary of seventeenth century Puritanism, "creatures" had a further sense, derived from New Testament usage, of material comforts. Thus Tobias Crisp denounced expressions by the godly of their sinfulness as "the rhetorick of misery in the creature".[43] It is in this sense that Ralpho, who has already been characterised as a Hermetic philosopher, uses it in Hudibras to explain the difference between "the wicked" and "the saints":

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* See p.11 above, and p.40 below.

Yet, as the wicked have no right
To th' creature,* though usurped by might,
The property is in the saint,
From whom th'injuriously detain't.
Of him they hold their luxuries,
Their dogs, their horses, whores and dice,
Their riots, revels, masques, delights,
Pimps, buffoons, fiddlers, parasites,
All which the saints have title to,
And ought t'enjoy, if they'd their due.
(I ii 1008-18)

Ralpho later expands these antinomian arguments. Having dismissed the Quakers as "weak" because they "little know/ What free-born consciences may do" he elaborates a more heretical code:

'Tis the temptation of the devil
That makes all human actions evil:
For saints may do the same things by
The spirit, in sincerity,
Which other men are tempted to
And at the devil's instance do;
And yet the actions be contrary,
Just as the saints and wicked vary.
(II ii 233-40)

But although there is much of the Ranter in Ralpho, Butler cannot afford to particularise this aspect, for he needs Ralpho to represent several other types as well. Winstanley, having no wider purpose, concentrates mainly on the sexual activities of the Ranters, which "use of creatures" implies. The Ranters, in keeping with their egalitarian principles and lowly status, addressed each other as "fellow creature" (a phrase which Winstanley originated). In their case the creatures used were in fact other humans.

Where Butler concentrates all his powers on the Ranters in his Characters, the results are devastating. "A Ranter" is "a Fanatic Hector, that has found out by a very strange Way of new Light, how to transform all the Devils into Angels of Light; for

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*The term was humorously applied to drink, in particular. Thus Wood says of Coppe and his gang: "they enjoyed the creature so much, that they were all downright drunk" (Athenae Oxonienses, ed. Bliss, III, col. 960).

he believes all Religion consists in Looseness, and that Sin and Vice is the whole Duty of Man". (p. 106) In his customary manner, Butler hits several targets here. By associating the Ranters with the primarily aristocratic Hectors, he discredits both. He satirises the belief in "inward light", while at the same time, by using contrasts similar to those in the Ranters' own writings (for example, The Light and Dark Sides of God), he manages to suggest the deviousness of their argument, or their ability to transform black into white. In addition, while he does not directly question the sincerity of their belief, by yoking it to the title of a popular manual of piety he leaves the reader in no doubt about its misguidedness, and at the same time conjures up a ludicrous picture of a strict Puritan at devotions which are far from what they appear.

By the time Winstanley used the term Ranter in February 1650 it was identified with Coppe's wider doctrine of pantheistic amoralism. Saltmarsh, Erbery, Dell and other preachers of free grace in the 1640's had aimed to liberate people from the formalism of the covenant theologians, and from the despair to which predestinarian theology reduced many who doubted their salvation. The resulting antinomianism, expressed in ideals which were hostile to the conventional concepts of good and evil, produced a sense of liberation from all restraint of law and morality. Men and women passed rapidly from one sect to another, from Presbyterian to Independent to Anabaptist to Seeker, Ranter or Quaker, like the Ranter Bunyan describes in Grace Abounding (paragraph 44), who claimed "that he had gone through all religions, and could never light on the right till now".

The restless progress from one sect to another was a characteristic shared by most of the leading Ranters. They all found organised religion unsatisfactory as an outlet for their particular brand of millenarian enthusiasm, and sought the answer in the antinomian doctrines of the spirit. Abiezer Coppe had been a Presbyterian minister, then an Anabaptist (in which capacity he boasted of having baptised seven thousand souls in the Midlands), before turning Ranter in 1649. He was an admirer of the religious individualist Richard Coppin, and wrote the Preface for his Divine Teachings (1649). This work forms an important link between the antinomian theories of Everard and his successors, and the ideological amoralism of the Ranters. Coppin's mystical pantheism implied that evil was only the carnal man's inability to recognise the divine principle within him - which was the starting point of Ranter doctrine.

The main purpose of Coppe's first tract, Some Sweet Sips of Some Spiritual Wine (1649) was to publicise the coming Millenium. Much more significant was A Fiery Flying Roll (January 1650), whose heightened, prophetic language, and revolutionary ideology, are directed at the emotions rather than the intellects of readers. The Light and Dark Sides of God (1650), by the more moderate Jacob Bauthumley, is a more reasoned and refined exposition of Ranterism. By contrast, Laurence Clarkson's A Single Eye (1650) is the most extreme expression of total amoralism published by any of the Ranters. Bauthumley was unhappy about the concept of sin which Coppe and Clarkson expounded, but his arguments for moderation went unheeded.

The Ranters believed that sin originated with the Fall. But they interpreted the Fall in the light of Neo-Platonic theory and Joachim of Fiore's doctrine of the three ages - the Age of the Father, or of the Law; the Age of the Son, or of the Gospel; and the Age of the Spirit, or of the Everlasting Gospel. The Age of the Spirit was to be a time of love, joy and freedom, when sin would cease, earthly possessions would no longer be needed, and mankind would live in a state of perfection, with the knowledge of God directly revealed in the hearts of all, until the last Judgment. This doctrine, based on Joachim's interpretation of the Bible, gave rise to a new form of millenarianism, with each generation identifying itself as the age of the Everlasting Gospel. It was introduced into England in the writings of Jacob Boehme, translated by John Sparrow between 1647 and 1661. As a common element in the antinomian climate of the Civil Wars, it influenced a variety of enthusiasts, including Saltmarsh, Erbery, Crisp, Winstanley and Muggleton, besides the Ranters. Boehme, who appears twice in Hudibras (I i 536 and II iii 643), was the chief agent for the introduction into England of the mystical doctrines and millenarian ideologies of the popular medieval religious movements. Their spiritual message, and particularly Boehme's teaching that heaven and hell were carried by every man with him in this world,* was revitalised in the stimulating atmosphere of England in the 1640's.

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*This idea occurs in Paradise Lost - see p.12 above.

Joachism justified the Ranters' rejection of the authority of Christian institutions, and encouraged their conviction that they were the chief instruments for the propagation of the Everlasting Gospel, prototypes of the perfect man of the Third Age. However, Ranter doctrine was inspired, not by the stimulus of current spiritual movements, but by their own mystical experiences. One can see this in the autobiographies of Coppe and Clarkson, with their story of despair, spiritual death, resurrection and regeneration - the same story which one reads in a more restrained form in Bunyan's Grace Abounding. But the Ranters aimed for a state of innocence shared by the young, the ignorant and the mad. They were the first to justify insanity and hysteria as positive virtues. This was to play into the hands of satirists like Butler and Swift, of course - one thinks of the Characters of "A Fanatic" and "An Anabaptist", Ralpho's attack on knowledge in Hudibras (I ii), or Swift's Mechanical Operation of the Spirit.* However, it was intended as a literal assertion of the antinomian opposition to the value of all worldly wisdom, knowledge and experience as a way to God.

The Ranters were often attacked for denying sin. In Grace Abounding (paragraph 161) Bunyan describes how, tempted to believe that there is "no such thing as a day of judgment, that we should

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*cf Robert Gould's use of madness. See Chapter V, p.282 below.

not rise again,* and that sin was no such grievous thing", he rejects these thoughts as "such conclusions that Atheists and Ranters do use to help themselves withal". It is on the point of the Ranters' attitude to sin that Butler produces some of his most heavily ironic satire. The Ranter, he says:

> believes himself shot-free against all the Attempts of the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, and therefore is not afraid to attack them in their own Quarters, and encounter them at their own Weapons. For ... a Saint, that is strong in Grace, may boldly engage himself in those great Sins and Iniquities, that would easily damn a weak Brother, and yet come off never the worse. He believes Deeds of Darkness to be only those Sins that are committed in private, not those that are acted openly and owned. He is but an Hypocrite turned the wrong Side outward; for, as the one wears his Vices within, and the other without, so when they are counter-changed the Ranter becomes an Hypocrite, and the Hypocrite an able Ranter." (pp. 106-7)

Though witty, this is both unfair to the Ranters, who were generally sincere, and a misrepresentation of their doctrine.

Butler, Bunyan and other enemies failed to understand, or chose to ignore, that what distinguished the Ranters from other enthusiasts of this period was their denial of the fundamental reality of sin. Where other antinomians had concluded that regenerate man was incapable of sin, the Ranters said that sin either did not exist (hence "that so called sin") or did so only in the imagination. They argued that all men were free from sin, not just a small elect, for all were moved by God, the origin of

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*The Ranters' denial of the Resurrection of the Dead is more fully dealt with in A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened (Works ed. Offor, II, 182-3). There are numerous other references to the Ranters in Bunyan's Works. Hill relates Bunyan to the Ranters and others in the Appendix to The World Turned Upside Down, pp. 328-31.

all life and acts. Spiritual regeneration was the intuitive revelation of the unity of God and creation, a unity which did not admit distinctions of good and evil, Heaven and Hell, God and the Devil.

Although they gave it the mystique of divine inspiration, the Ranters also presented their doctrine of sin as a rational deduction from the proposition that God's infinity would be limited by an evil principle. Either God was finite, a contradiction in terms, or he was that evil principle, or rather it was a misapprehension of God.* They believed, like Winstanley, that reason and spirit were synonymous, and the deity little more than the life principle of the universe. Both Winstanley and Clarkson were intensely aware of the dualism of matter, but they came to strikingly different conclusions, despite their similar terminology. Whereas Winstanley viewed the whole history of religion as a contrast between flesh and spirit, the struggle between good and evil in man, Clarkson conceived of truth as a union of opposites. He said of the resurrection of the body, for example:

> let it be under what title soever, thou art risen from title to act, from act to power, from power to his name, and that only one name, pure and undefiled; so that now thou art of purer eys than to behold any iniquity, so that Devil is God, Hell is Heaven, Sin Holiness, Damnation Salvation, this and only this is the first Resurrection. (Cohn, p 315).

A similar "reconciliation of opposites" can be seen in the titles of Ranter works - for example <u>The Light and Dark Sides of God</u>, or

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*Satan uses this argument to convince Eve that "God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just, /Not just, not God" (<u>Paradise Lost</u>, IX, 698-701).

Heights in Depths. The latter, a phrase from Romans (viii 38), is twice used by Bunyan in Grace Abounding (paragraphs 111 and 252). But whereas Bunyan uses it to express innocent joy and enthusiasm, the double paradox of Salmon's title, Heights in Depths and Depths in Heights, has more revolutionary implications.

Like the Black Mass, that more systematic inversion of orthodox Christian ritual, Ranterism expressed an extreme reaction. It rebelled against the stern Calvinist teaching of innate sinfulness and the inability of the majority to ensure salvation. The Ranters reacted against the guilt and anxieties induced by the fear of damnation, advocating a doctrine of total freedom - liberty without responsibility. But the Ranters' reaction also reflected positive moral principles. They argued that it was hypocrisy to obey the law because of fear of damnation resulting from disobedience. There could be no guarantee of the morality of the outward act: intention was all. A man's conscience was the ultimate authority: if he believed himself to be incapable of sin, then he could not sin. Furthermore, the ability to apprehend the good or evil of an act indicated that you had, like Adam, eaten from the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil. As Coppe put it, his denial of dualism echoing Clarkson's:

> But all you that eat of the Tree of Knowledge
> of Good and Evill, and have not your Evill eye
> Pickt out, you call Good Evill, and Evill Good;
> Light Darknesse, and Darknesse Light; Truth
> Blasphemy, and Blasphemy Truth. (p 323)

The implication was that the Ranters had achieved that primitivist state of innocence claimed by some medieval sects. But a major difference was that whereas the Brethren of the Free Spirit could be described as "an élite of amoral supermen"[44] whose "communism" was no more than an unjustified assumption of their own right to exploit ordinary unenlightened mortals, the Ranters sincerely emphasised giving and sharing rather than their own privilege, and their writings show a concern for the human dignity of the poor and down-trodden, as well as enthusiasm for the imminent day of liberty, brotherhood and social justice.

The Ranters differed from their medieval counter-parts because they were the heirs of a successful revolution which they still hoped to see carried to a victorious end. The title page of Clarkson's A Single Eye bears the legend:

> Imprinted at London, in the Year that the POWERS of Heaven and Earth Was, Is, and Shall be Shaken, yea Damned, till they be no more for EVER.

Coppe's is much more specific:

> A Fiery Flying Roll: A Word from the Lord to all the Great Ones of the Earth, whom this may concerne: Being the last WARNING PIECE at the dreadful day of JUDGEMENT. For now the Lord is come to 1) Informe 2) Advise and warne 3) Charge 4) Judge and sentence the Great Ones. As also most compassionately informing, and most lovingly and pathetically advising and warning London. With a terrible Word, and fatall Blow from the Lord, upon the Gathered CHURCHES. And all by his Most Excellent MAJESTY, dwelling in, and shining though AUXILIUM PATRIS, alias Coppe. With another FLYING ROLL ensuing (to all the Inhabitants of the Earth). Imprinted at London, in the beginning of that notable day, wherein the secrets of all hearts are laid open; and wherein the worst and foulest of villanies, are discovered, under the best and fairest outsides.

The social content of the Ranters' writings lived up to the revolutionary fervour of these introductions. Clarkson praised the communism of Winstanley and the Diggers, which he saw as a striving towards "unity one with another", and denounced property as the cause of much of the world's injustice:

> I apprehended that there was no such thing as theft, cheat, or a lie, but as man made it so: for if the creature had brought this world into (no) propriety, as Mine and Thine, there had been no such title as theft, cheat, or a lie. (p 311)

Such ideas were widespread, and by no means restricted to the leading Ranter prophets such as Coppe* and Clarkson. The Ranters Last Sermon, for example, states:

> They taught, that it was quite contrary to the end of Creation, to Appropriate anything to any Man or Woman; but that there ought to be Community of all things.[45]

Eight dissident Ranters similarly alleged in The Ranters Declaration that they were urged:

> ... not only to make use of a Man's Wife, but of his Estate, Goods and Chattels also, for all things were common. (Cohn, p 301)

Although these ideas alarmed the establishment, they never really posed a serious threat. They arose as a result of the defeat by the Independents of the radical, plebeian element in the Revolution. Where the Levellers, with mass support, organisation and an attractive programme based on a carefully considered political theory, had failed, it was never very likely that the Ranters, groups of confused mystical anarchists, in a time of political retreat, with a programme consisting of little more than awaiting

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*For Coppe's communism, see below, p.56.

the coming of "God the Great Leveller", would succeed. While some disillusioned Levellers did become Ranters after their defeat, the more substantial and balanced were likelier to be repelled by the wild language and conduct of the Ranters.

One of the most offensive in this respect must have been Abiezer Coppe, whose life illustrates important aspects of libertine behaviour. The guilt induced by his strict non-conformist upbringing gave him in adolescence an obsessive conviction of his sinfulness, for which he imposed on himself various penances. At the same time he suffered a persistent desire to swear and curse. To some extent his progress was the mirror image of Bunyan's. In Grace Abounding (paragraph 293) Bunyan confesses being tempted, since his conversion, to utter blasphemies while preaching. Coppe claims to have avoided all swearing for twenty-seven years. His later assignment of a positive value to swearing may be a rationalisation of his own long-suppressed desire to swear. In the Roll he says he would rather:

> heare a mighty Angell (in man) swearing a full-mouthed Oath ... cursing and making others fall a swearing, than heare a zealous Presbyterian, Independent or spiritual Notionist pray, preach, or exercise.
>
> Well! One hint more; there's swearing ignorantly, i'th darke, vainely, and there's swearing i'th light, gloriously.[46]

Bunyan in his unregenerate phase admits "cursing and swearing, and playing the madman". For this, he tells us, he was reprimanded by a "loose ungodly wretch" of a woman, who nevertheless:

> protested that I swore and cursed at that most fearful rate, that she was made to tremble to hear me; and told me further, that I was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that ever she heard in all her life; and that I, by thus doing, was able to spoil all the youth in a whole town, if they came but in my company. (Paragraph 26)

Coppe's behaviour, more varied in its outrageousness, provoked even more shocked reactions.

If Anthony à Wood can be believed, Coppe's early asceticism was no longer very evident by the time he came to Merton College, Oxford:

> all lectures or examples could not reform, or make, him live like a Christian: And it was then notoriously known that he would several times entertain for one night or more a wanton huswife in his Chamber ... to whom carrying several times meat, at the hour of refection, he would make answer, when being asked by the way, what he would do with it, that 'it was a bit for his cat'.[47]

When the Civil War broke out Coppe left Oxford without taking his degree, and followed the life of an itinerant preacher, until, after the prolonged spiritual crisis described in vivid detail in the Preface to A Fiery Flying Roll, he was converted to Ranterism in the middle of 1649. By autumn he had obeyed his command to go to London, where he began a series of sermons to the poor, attacking the rich. He describes himself as:

> charging so many Coaches, so many hundreds of men and women of the greater rank, in the open streets, with my hand stretched out, my hat cock't up, staring on them as if I would look through them, gnashing with my teeth at some of them, and day and night with a huge loud voice proclaiming the day of the Lord throughout London and Southwark. (p 327)

It is probably an occasion such as this to which Laurence Clarkson refers when he mentions being told that: "if I had come a little sooner I might have seen Mr Copp, who then had lately appeared in a most dreadful manner". (p 310)

Clarkson could equally well be referring to Coppe's habit, apparently prompted by Adamitic urges, of appearing in public naked. Wood says:

> 'Twas usual with him to preach stark naked many blasphemies and unheard-of Villanies in the Daytime, and in the Night to drink and lye with a Wench, that had been also his hearer, stark naked. (col. 960)

This sounds very like the sensational allegations of a number of pamphlets published in 1650 and 1651, with the motive of discrediting the Ranters. On the other hand, Coppe and Clarkson are remarkably frank about their behaviour, so it is unwise to dismiss such allegations out of hand. There was undoubtedly a ritual quality about their meetings, which often took place in taverns, with the use of alcohol and tobacco to heighten their spiritual vision. One student of them even goes so far as to draw an analogy with the recent craze for mind-expanding drugs, remarking that: "For the Ranters life became a permanent transcendental experience".[48]

It is not surprising that more conventional religious leaders should be shocked by such behaviour. George Fox had many encounters with the Ranters from 1649 onwards. Coppe and a group of fellow Ranters who visited Fox in prison in 1655 shocked him by calling for drink and tobacco.[49] Though Coppe appears to have been much inclined to drunkenness, his positive advocacy of the

efficacy of swearing caused more concern. The Ranters Ranting tells us that he cursed for an hour on end in the pulpit of a London church, and that he swore at the hostess of a tavern so fearsomely that "she trembled and quaked for some hours after".[50] Richard Baxter could not understand how:

> men and women professing the zealous fear of God, should ... be brought to place their Religion in revelling, roaring, drinking, whoring, open full-mouthed swearing ordinarily by the Wounds and Blood of God, and the fearfullest cursing that hath been heard.[51]

The Presbyterian Thomas Edwards considered his anger justifiable:

> An Independent Antinomian Libertine Preacher here in London said That a poore whoremonger, or a poore drunkard cannot look into your Churches (speaking of the Presbyterian Preachers) but hell must be flashed and thrown into their faces.[52]

In his indignation, Edwards was unable to see that his critics had a valid point. It was precisely to such poor and rejected elements that the Ranters appealed. They regarded sin as a fiction invented by the ruling classes in Church and State to keep the common people in subjection and deprive them of that natural liberty which had come to be regarded as the right of all. They were not irreligious, but committed enthusiasts dissatisfied with the prevailing religious standards. Their crudity was a protest against conventional piety, which they regarded as hypocritical. They did not blaspheme God, but traditional conceptions of God, and their rejection of the traditional Christian attitudes to sin, Hell and the Devil were a measure of the anxieties which these aroused in them.

Coppe, Giles Calvert and Laurence Clarkson were leaders of the orgiastic Ranters who called themselves "My One Flesh". Brought up an Anglican, Clarkson was, at different times, Presbyterian, Independent, Antinomian, Baptist, Seeker, Ranter and finally Muggletonian. His physical and spiritual adventures are recorded in his autobiography The Lost Sheep Found (1660), which in the opinion of A.L.Morton, the foremost authority on the Ranters, is "of greater intrinsic interest than Bunyan's Grace Abounding".[53] It is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable extant accounts of libertine behaviour. This behaviour can, like that of many other libertines, be explained (at least in part) as being a reaction against a youthful Puritanism. In the period when he was "Captain of the Rant" he expresses:

> no small pleasure and delight in praising of a God who was an infinite nothing, what great and glorious things the Lord had done, in bringing us out of bondage to the perfect liberty of the sons of God, and yet the very motion of my heart was to all manner of theft, cheat, wrong or iniquity that privately could be acted, though in tongue I professed the contrary. (Cohn, p 311)

Unlike Sade, Clarkson stopped short of murder, though the Ranters' detractors failed to give them credit for this.[54]

Clarkson lodged for a time in Rood Lane, where "I had clients many that I was not able to answer all desires ... I had most of the principal women come to my quarters", but "I was still careful for moneys for my Wife, onely my body was given to other women". (p 311) Soon "it became a trade so common,

that all the froth and scum broke forth" (p 311), and the authorities began to intervene. For a while he avoided trouble by visiting the country, but he soon returned to London, still convinced:

> that in the grave there was no remembrance of either joy or sorrow after. For this I conceived, as I knew not what I was before I came in being, my being was dissolved ... yet notwithstanding this I had sometimes a relenting light in my soul, fearing this should not be so, as indeed it was the contrary; but however, then a cup of Wine would wash away this doubt.[55]

This is a mixture of enthusiasm and the scepticism of the Restoration rake. Indeed, when Clarkson describes the "sacrament" he performs at the tavern, his rituals become indistinguishable from their ironic parodies in such poems as The Libertine's Religion.* He is much franker than Bunyan is about his libertine phase,+ but he does not have the boastful, hectoring tone of the Restoration rake's "confession". He returns to his "Progress", as he calls it:

> I came for London again to visit my old Society; which then Mary Middleton of Chelsford and Mrs Star was deeply in love with me, so having parted with Mrs Middleton, Mrs Star and I went up and down the countries as man and wife, spending our time in feasting and drinking, so that Tavernes I called the house of God; and the Drawers, Messengers; and Sack, Divinity; reading in Solomons writings it must be so, in that it made glad the heart of God; which before, and at that time, we had several meetings of great company, and that some, no mean ones neither, were there, and at that time, they improved their liberty, where Doctor Pagets maid stript herself naked and skipped among them, but being in a Cooke shop, there was no hunger, so that I kept myself to Mrs Star.[55]

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*See below, p.308ff.

+It has been suggested to me by Mr Roger Pooley that Bunyan may in fact be exaggerating his libertine phase.

Bunyan, in Grace Abounding, is concerned for his reputation, and is comparatively reticent about his past behaviour. He dismisses as "slanders" certain false reports "that I had my misses, my whores, my bastards, yea, two wives at once, and the like" (paragraph 309). Indeed, he maintains that he has gone to the other extreme, saying that God:

> made me shy of women from my first conversion until now ... that it is a rare thing to see me carry it pleasant towards a woman; the common salutation of a woman I abhor, it is odious to me in whomsoever I see it. Their company alone, I cannot away with. I seldom so much as touch a woman's hand ... (paragraph 315).

Of his dealings with the Ranters, he records that there were many people:

> who, though strict in religion formerly, yet were also swept away by these Ranters. These would also talk with me of their ways, and condemn me as legal and dark; pretending that they only had attained to perfection that could do what they would, and not sin. (paragraph 45)

But though he was tempted, his faith sustained him:

> Oh! these temptations were suitable to my flesh, I being but a young man, and my nature in its prime; but God, who had, as I hope, designed me for better things, kept me in the fear of his name, and did not suffer me to accept of such principles.

Clearly, the activities of Clarkson and his group did not go unnoticed. It was probably "My One Flesh" more than anything else which prompted the Independents of the Rump to suppress the Ranters. Parliament aimed to regulate the general symptoms of Ranterism by passing an act on 20 May 1650 to punish incest and adultery with death, fornication with three months' imprisonment,

and death for a second offence. In June they set up a Committee to enquire into the Ranters and other heretical groups. It reported on June 21 "on the several abominable Practices of a Sect called Ranters", and a bill was prepared which was debated in June and July. On 9 August Parliament passed its "Act for the Punishment of Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable Opinions",[56] which was generally considered to supersede the ordinance of May 1648 "for the preventing of the growth and spreading of heresie and Blasphemy" (known as the "Draconick Ordinance"). The Blasphemy Act declared a number of heresies to be punishable by six months' imprisonment, with banishment for a second offence. Although its provisions were directed principally against the Ranters, it remained the only statutory statement about unacceptable religious opinions throughout the Commonwealth and Protectorate. After the first wave of Ranter activity had subsided, it became primarily an instrument for the suppression of other popular enthusiastic movements potentially dangerous to public order. The Quakers were the worst sufferers, but the Muggletonians also fell foul of it. Bunyan, who was arrested in November 1660, under an Elizabethan law resurrected for the purpose, protested: "that law by which I am in prison ... was made against those that, being designed to do evil in their meetings, make the exercise of religion their pretence, to cover their wickedness".[57]

The passage of the Act was the signal for extensive action against the Ranters. Coppe and Salmon had already been imprisoned, and on 1 February Parliament had ordered copies of the Roll, which contained "many horrid Blasphemies, and damnable and detestable opinions", to be burned by the public hangman. Soon after the

Act was passed Coppe was brought before a Parliamentary Committee. According to the account in The Routing of the Ranters, confirmed in The Weekly Intelligencer, he feigned madness, "flinging Apples and Pears about the roome, whereupon the Committee returned him to Newgate whence he came."[58] Clarkson proved equally difficult when his turn came to appear. He followed the example of Lilburne and Overton in standing on his rights as a free citizen to refuse to answer any questions that might incriminate him. A Parliamentary Order of 27 September ordered A Single Eye to be publicly burnt.

Bauthumley's Light and Dark Sides of God, written while he was still in the Army, alarmed the authorities in his native Leicester. They sent it to London for advice, for it seemed to them to be "of a very dangerous consequence and lets open a very wide dore to Atheisme and profanes/ sic/ ".[59] Bauthumley was burned through the tongue, a punishment whose savagery is probably accounted for by recent memories of the Levellers at Burford. But his was a quietist form of Ranterism, and his only blasphemy lay in propounding the pantheistic doctrine that God was in every living thing, and that it was sinful to perform an action if persuaded by our own spirit (the mind of God within us) that we should not do it. He continued as an active Ranter in Leicester, but ended up as a sufficiently respectable citizen to be appointed sergeant-at-mace early in 1660 and library keeper in 1667. That his reformation was complete is shown by his publication in 1676 of A brief Historical Relation of the most Material Passages and Persecutions of the Church of Christ, derived from Fox's Book of Martyrs.

From some of the anti-Ranter pamphlets, which appeared in great numbers in December 1650 and January 1651, we learn of the persecution and suppression of Ranters in other parts of the country. An Army Ranter was hanged by the thumbs; one W. Smith was hanged at York "for denying the Deity, Arian-like";[60] the Parliamentary Committee was reconvened to investigate Ranters in Ely and Dorset (Cohn, p 295), and Ranter groups were dispersed or arrested at York, Uxbridge and King's Lynn,[61] to name only a few. There are particularly well authenticated accounts of a Ranter meeting involving members of "My One Flesh" at the David and Harp tavern in Moor Lane, which resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of seven of them, in November 1650. From these we learn that they addressed each other as "Fellow creature", and it is evident from the descriptions of their rituals that they attached a quasi-mystical significance to their language and actions.[62] Some pamphlets claim that large numbers of Ranters had repented. Although the Routing of the Ranters supplies one or two interesting details, most of the pamphlets are quite unreliable. Many are of a scurrilous nature, some having obscene woodcuts illustrating the Ranters' revels. Among their suggestions are that the Ranters are agents of either the Royalists (whose clandestine propaganda in turn blamed Cromwell for them)[63] or the Jesuits, that the Devil in person attended their meetings, and other absurdities.

The Ranters were attacked on more reasonable grounds, as early February 1650, by the Anabaptists,* who had previously dissociated themselves from the Levellers, another group they saw to be unpopular with the Government. The Presbyterian establishment joined in with A Blow at the Root, or some Observations towards A Discovery of the Subtilties and Devices of Satan (March 1650). The author takes the opportunity to attack all the sects, on the grounds that one thing leads to another:

> An over-curious questioning of some things appertaining to Religion (against which I conceive, no cleare evidence can be given) disposeth to Separation: Separation is an ordinary step to Anabaptisme; Anabaptisme perfects itself in Seeking, being above Ordinances, and Questioning everything revealed in the Scriptures, and in high Raptures and Revelations. This determinates in Levelling, and (through that) runnes compasse (with some) to that strange and fearfull straine declared and taught in the late Fiery flying Roll; which states the perfection of all Religion expressly in perfect Libertinisme. So that Profaneness ye may perceive, is the Devils Alpha and Omega. (Morton, p 102)

The combination of witch-hunting propaganda, legislative action and the imprisonment of their leading spokesmen and many of their followers were blows from which the Ranters never fully recovered. They were forced underground, and their growth was checked, since they were constrained to avoid publicity instead of seeking it. Consequently they were no longer news, and references to their activities, about which there is no further indication of offical concern, decrease sharply. There is little reliable information about them after 1651, except from the

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*Surprisingly, since most strains of left-wing Puritanism originate from them.

Quakers, from whom come accounts of more or less isolated groups all over the country until as late as 1672. But Ranterism had ceased to be a revolutionary force by 1651. The Ranter prophets had combined a revolutionary ideology and a mood of disillusion with and contempt for contemporary religion. But the spirit of utopian anticipation was short-lived, and the response to Coppe's and Clarkson's propaganda activities ephemeral. The nucleus of the movement they had founded, and sustained by the impetus of their campaign, collapsed when they were imprisoned and their followers threatened by the law. However, Ranter doctrine continued to provide satisfaction for others, as we will see.

Clarkson was released from prison after about a month, and the sentence of banishment passed on him was never carried out. After a period of disillusionment, he was converted in 1658 by the prophet John Reeve, himself a former Ranter. In 1659 he wrote a book expounding the Muggletonian doctrine of the Two Seeds. Here the view commonly held by many of the sects, that the rich, powerful and wicked were descended from Cain, and the poor, oppressed and godly from Abel, is linked with the Muggletonian view of the Fall, in which Cain was the son, not of Adam, but of Eve and the Devil, "whose nature is pure Reason".[64] As a result the human race is divided into the Seed of Adam, who are to be saved, and the Seed of Cain, who, besides being damned, are in fact devils, the Devil having no existence except in the Seed of Cain. Reeve and Muggleton claimed the power to recognise the

Seed of Cain at sight, and pronounce on it its existing sentence of damnation - a power which they exercised frequently. Reeve and Muggleton, influenced by Boehme, had also carried the Joachite gospel of the Three Ages to its logical conclusion in their Three Commissions. The Third Age was deemed to have begun with the Commission given to Reeve in 1652. Here, the doctrine of the Everlasting Gospel was a present reality, as opposed to a utopian dream of the future, and Clarkson continued to preach it, under Muggleton, until his death in 1667. Muggleton himself remained in the public eye. He was tried in January 1677 for blasphemous writing, and his subsequent sentence to be thrice pilloried supplied a central image for John Oldham's Character of a Certain Ugly Old P -.

Coppe remained in prison for about a year and a half altogether, and whilst in Newgate even succeeded in converting a number of his many visitors to Ranterism, by his "smooth arguments".[65] He issued a partial recantation, A Remonstrance of the sincere and zealous Protestation of Abiezer Coppe Against the Blasphemous and Execrable Opinions recited in the Act of Aug 10 1650. (January 1651), but it did not satisfy the authorities, and he remained in prison until he had written a fuller one, Copps Return to the Wayes of Truth ... and the Wings of the Fiery flying Roll clipt (May 30). This seems to have convinced them, but when Coppe preached his recantation sermon at Burford in September he drew forth the suspicious comments of John Tickell, Minister of Abingdon, whose The Bottomles Pit Smoaking in Familisme ... together with some breef

notes on AB. COPPS Recantation Sermon (as 'twere) gives a rare insight into how the Ranters behaved in the face of persecution:

> [They] use to speak one thinge and mean another ... They will say and unsay in one breath ... Before the late Act against Ranters, they spake boldly, now they dare not ... Since the pretence of the conversion of severall of them to the way of truth, they have a generall straine of Clothing their corrupt notions with sound words, especially such scripture expressions as will beare a generall sense, as for Instance. They will tell you that Christ was Crucified at Jerusalem, ... but in what sence ? abominably corrupt, as a type and figure of the true death of Christ in them (as they pretend). (Cohn, p 296)

This is consistent with the emphasis Ranters (and later descendants) put on the mystery rather than the history in Scripture. Since they believed themselves to be directly instructed by the word of God within, they minimised the importance of the external, written word, and interpreted the scriptures by their "inner light". Tickell makes them sound quite Machiavellian:

> It seems to me, from what I have knowne of them, they will put themselves on all expressions, wayes and windings, to keep themselves from being known, but to their owne: you shall not know where to find them, so as to fasten on them, but their own shall know their meaning, and so may you when you have once got their Key ... You shall find it, for a never failing observation, they will first insinuate an interest in your affections, and then corrupt your judgement. They will smile upon you, and cut your throate: use melting words, Honey sweet, smoothe as oyle, but full of poyson. (pp. 296-7)*

A close reading of Copps Return supports this charge of a secret language. However, Coppe is unequivocal in maintaining his belief that all men, including thieves, murderers and adulterers, are equally sinful in the eyes of God, though he denies

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*For an expression of similar sentiments about mankind in general see Rochester's Satyr, ll. 135-6 - discussed in Chapter II, p.124 below.

that there is no sin. Similarly, in denying that community of wives is lawful, he is able to stress the more revolutionary aspects of community:

> As for community, I own none but that Apostolical saint-like Community, spoken of in the Scriptures.
>
> So far as I either do, or should own community, that if flesh of my flesh, be ready to perish; I either will, or should call nothing that I have, mine own.
>
> If I have bread it shall, or should be his, else all my religion is in vain. I am for dealing bread to the hungry, for cloathing the naked, for the breaking of every yoak, for the letting of the oppressed go free ...
>
> I own none other, long for none other, but that glorious (Rom. 8) liberty of the sons of God.
>
> Which God will hasten in its time. (Morton, p 109)

Despite this fighting talk, Coppe was little heard of after his release from prison, and after the Restoration he practised physic at Barnes under the title of Dr.Higham until his death in 1672.[66]

The life of Joseph Salmon, as told in his autobiography-cum-recantation Heights in Depths and Depths in Heights, was in important respects similar to Coppe's and Clarkson's. He displayed the same restless progress from Presbyterian to Independent to Anabaptist, and his conversion to Ranterism was preceded, like theirs (and like Bunyan's conversion), by a deep spiritual crisis. Like Bauthumley, he began to write in the Army, and his first work, Anti-Christ in Man (December 1647) was an exposition of that antinomianism which he would later put into practice as a Ranter. He gave expression to the millenarian enthusiasm of the early months of 1649 in A Rout, A Rout, which ingeniously interpreted contemporary events according to Joachite principles.* On leaving the Army he

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*Royalists sometimes used an analagous technique to discredit the Revolutionaries. Cleveland, for example, means readers of The Rustick Rampant, or Rural Anarchy Affronting Monarchy: in the Insurrection of Wat Tyler to apply his account of the Peasants' Revolt to the Civil War situation.

wrote Divinity Anatomised, a work which is now lost, but which other sources indicate was the main vehicle for his Ranter ideas. Fox mentions arguing with Salmon and other Ranters in prison at Coventry late in 1649. Either he was released "not long after this"[67] and re-imprisoned at a later date, or he stayed in gaol until he had written Heights in Depths, which was not published until 13 August 1651. There is a report that he was a minister in Kent in 1650, preaching frequently in Rochester Cathedral. Certainly he had a group of followers at Rochester in 1651, where they were accused of "Ranting Familisme".[68] Soon he became disillusioned and left for the Barbadoes, recommending Richard Coppin as his successor.

Coppin at Rochester adapted the anarchic slogans of the Diggers and Ranters. He asserted the liberty and equality of all men in Christ. His sermon preached at Somerset House in London in May 1653 was a pertinent commentary on political events, inspired by the dissolution of the Rump, and served as a reminder of the political implications of popular antinomianism. In 1655 his sermons in Rochester Cathedral, which had attracted the sympathy of soldiers, caused him to be imprisoned. Coppin's propaganda, like the Ranters', bred opposition to conventional law and customs in the name of libertarian utopianism. His teaching asserted the omnipotence of the individual, who owed obedience only to his own conscience, without the Ranters' crude emphasis on a cult of immorality. He denied being a Ranter, and was really closer to Winstanley than to Coppe. Clarkson classed him with the Quakers.

Although the later Quakers were to spend much energy dissociating themselves from the Ranters, in the 1650's the two were very close together. Bunyan, writing in 1656[69] as the protagonist of Calvinist theology, treats Ranterism as a consequence of the dangers inherent in antinomianism, and describes both Quakers and Ranters as Familist, by which he means any attempt to distort the literal accuracy of Scripture. He says the greatest temptation from the path of righteousness is the presumptuous confidence which Quakers and Ranters claim in their salvation. Bunyan mentions "the errors of the Quakers" in Grace Abounding (paragraph 123) as one of the things which confirmed him in his own opinions.

Fox hoped to avoid the dangers of Ranterism by compromising between the individualism of the mystic and the communal responsibility of sectarianism. Thus the movements of the inner light had to be judged by their conformity to the objective moral code of the New Testament. This was often a difficult balance, and there are many examples of over-enthusiasm among the early Quakers which prompt their identification with the Ranters. Sometimes this confusion was encouraged by their enemies to discredit the Quakers, as is perhaps the case with the allegations of nudity and immorality made by Thomas Underhill in Hell broke loose: or an history of the Quakers (1660).[70] But there were grounds for genuine confusion, particularly where the over-enthusiasm took a Messianic form, as it had with the Ranter "Gods" John Robins and William Franklin. James Nayler's triumphant ride into Bristol in 1656, for example, has been described as the culmination of the Ranter tendency in Quakerism.[71]

Nayler himself asserts the similarity of Quakers and Ranters in Love to the Lost, as does Thomas Collier in A Looking-Glasse for the Quakers (1651). Bunyan compares them in detail in A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened:[72]

> the Ranters ... made it their Business ... to set up the Light of Nature, under the Name of Christ in Man, and to dishonour and cry down the Church, the Scripture, the present Ministry, and our Worship and Ordinances; and call'd men to hearken to Christ within them: But withal they conjoyned a Cursed Doctrine of Libertinism, which brought them to all abominable filthiness of Life.[73]

He continues a little later: "The Quakers were but the Ranters turned from horrid profaneness and blasphemy to a life of extreme austerity on the other side. Their doctrines were mostly the same with the Ranters."[73] Another contemporary says more pointedly: "the Ranter is more open, and lesse sowre";[74] while A Proclamation prohibiting the Disturbing of Ministers (February 1654) lumps together "Quakers, Ranters and others".

Fox, looking back on the beginnings of the Quaker movement, quotes a statement by Justice Hotham in 1652 that the Quakers prevented England from being overrun by Ranters:

> ...if God had not raised up this principle of light and life, the nation had been overspread with Ranterism and all the Justices in the nation could not stop it with all their laws, because they would have done and said as they commanded them and yet kept their principle still.[75]

Unlike that of the Ranters, the Quakers' principle led them to bear witness in public, which made them far less dangerous in the eyes of authority than the Ranters, who would compromise and recant, but remain of the same opinion. Justice Hotham's statement may be suspect as a historical judgment, but it implies both the difference

between the Quakers and the Ranters and the greater acceptability of Quakers to the establishment, while at the same time indicating that their doctrines were similar enough for the Quakers to absorb the Ranters. Certainly many Ranters became Quakers, though none of the leaders did so. Whereas the Ranters emerged into prominence quite suddenly soon after the collapse of the Levellers in 1649, the growth of the Quakers, after the defeat of the Ranters by the Blasphemy Act, was slower and more lasting.

The Quakers were of necessity more circumspect than the Ranters, on account of the Act, but many aspects of the Ranters' behaviour, such as their swearing, were offensive to them anyway, as Fox's Journal testifies.[76] But although their aims were antithetical, Quakers and Ranters were interconnected aspects of the wider movement of protest against contemporary religious standards and the social values they instilled. The Quakers tended to use the term Ranterism loosely, to cover the antinomian and perfectionist theories of a variety of enthusiasts who did not share the Quakers' vision of the moral and spiritual crusade. They even called theoretical antinomians "civil ranters" to distinguish them from active exponents of amoralism, in much the same way that Bunyan and later Mandeville and others distinguished between "professed" or "speculative" and "practical" atheists.[77]

Fox saw Quakerism versus Ranterism as the relevant issue in the conflict between the principles of individualism and authority, which first came to a head in the Nayler affair. Fox taught a common submission to the Law revealed through the spirit, whereas Nayler and the Ranters abrogated the Law for the fancies of the

individual. Fox said that the considerable opposition resulting from his attitude to Nayler was stirred up by the Ranters - again using this as a generic term for fanatical enthusiasts. The main ground for dispute was the need for organisation, which the Ranters opposed. The result of the Nayler affair was a victory for the forces of law and order, and a tightening of the organisation. Fox's problem of how to impose discipline on an amorphous collection of individualists led to greater emphasis by the Quakers on human sinfulness and a curbing of the individualism of the appeal to Christ in every man. Ranterism came to be equated with any deviation from the party line of Fox's policy, which found an apologist in Robert Barclay's The Anarchy of the Ranters, and other Libertines, the Hierarchy of the Romanists and other Pretended Churches, equally Refused and Refuted (1676). It was ironic that Fox came to condemn as Ranter anarchy the bold egalitarianism he had preached during the Interregnum. The Quakers also came to accept something which the Ranters had totally rejected, the economic consequences of Puritan emphasis on sin: the compulsion to labour, save and accumulate. The Diggers and the Ranters had produced an alternative to this middle-class Protestant work ethic.

The Ranters' achievement lay in turning the loftiest ideals of antinomianism from the realm of speculation to the field of action. Their life was short, but more influential than is generally supposed. At their height in 1650 there must have been hardly any part of England which did not feel their influence. The reaction from the authorities was inevitable: they were crushed as

a deviant minority. They provided their opponents with a powerful argument against religious toleration. The Puritans, who believed that without the perpetual fear of eternal punishment all moral restraints would collapse, found a justification for their beliefs in the Ranters. Sin returned. After the Restoration the Act of Settlement (1662) ended the mobility which had been so essential to the spread of Ranter doctrines by migratory craftsmen and preachers. Other represeive measures were introduced to quell the sectaries - for example the Uniformity Act (1662), as a result of which John Oldham's father lost his living in Wiltshire.[78]

Groups of Ranters remained after 1651, and we hear of them frequently from the Quakers. A large number of Ranters led by Bauthumley united with Baptists to try to disrupt a national Quaker meeting in Leicestershire in January 1655, for instance.[79] This combination suggests either that Ranterism was not always synonymous with the pursuit of immorality (Bauthumley was a moderate), or that the Baptists were closer to the Ranters than they admitted (Bunyan and other commentators provide some evidence for this). Richard Farnworth, in the Preface to <u>The Ranters Principles and Deceits Discovered and Declared against</u> (1655), records much Ranter activity in Leicestershire in the mid-1650's. The Quaker Swarthmore Manuscripts provide further evidence. To take the town of Leek, Staffordshire, as an example: letters attest to the regular meetings of a group there in 1656, and to frequent disputes between Ranters and Quakers at the house of Thomas Hammersley in Basford, nearby.[80] The Leek Ranters became increasingly receptive to Quakerism, but the Quakers did not always win: Fox laments the conversion of two Quakers to Ranterism as late as 1668 and 1672.[81]

3 Conclusion

A. L. Morton says that Ranterism has a light and a dark side, like Bauthumley's God. The light side is its pantheistic mysticism, and accounts for Morton's appreciation of:

> the passion, the poetry, the vision, the attempt at a comprehensive world outlook, however confused, which gave the Ranters a firm and peculiar place in the English Revolution and in the list of English heresies, and which established them as a main link in the chain that runs from Joachim of Fiore to William Blake.[82]

This point is certainly arguable, though by its very nature difficult to prove. Their passion and their poetry is shared with contemporaries such as Vaughan and Marvell, the "Hortulan Saints".* The prose-poetry of parts of the Ranter autobiographies compares favourably with Bunyan, and this strain does not appear again in English literature until William Blake. Morton's view of the Ranters' importance is shared by Christopher Hill, who specifically mentions Burns and Blake as having affinities, and adds: "More work could probably discover more connections."[83] Despite the defeat of the sects at the Restoration, the radicals gave more to posterity than is immediately obvious, but their influence, Hill explains, is hard to show, since the relaxed and ordered society of the eighteenth century "pushed all its contradictions underground".[84]

The dark side of Ranterism is made up of "rude scepticism and anticlericalism",[85] which, like the pantheistic mysticism, has a

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*See below, Chapter III, p. 144.

long history. It arises from the role of the Church as exploiter, and dates back to long before the Reformation. Chaucer for one was well aware of the hostility aroused by the corruption and luxury of the higher clergy and the monastic orders. Many radical sects in the English Revolution shared the cry to abolish tithes, a demand which was as important as the earlier attack on the sale of indulgences. With the anti-clericalism went "a crude, and, to the orthodox, hideously blasphemous rejection of Christianity and of religion itself".[86] Morton shows that the allegations made against the Ranters by John Holland in The Smoke of the Bottomlesse Pit (1651) were similar to the atheistical remarks that Marlowe was supposed to have uttered. Even the more sensational accounts of Ranter language and ritual should not be rejected. One tells of some Ranters at dinner:

> eating a piece of beef, one of them took it in his hand, tearing it asunder said to the other, This is the flesh of Christ, take and eat.
>
> The other took a cup of Ale and threw it into the chimney corner, saying, There is the bloud of Christ. And having some discourse of God it was proved that one of them said, That he could go into the house of Office and make a God every morning, by easing his body.[87]

The only difference between this and the elaborate parodies of Christian ritual practised by militant atheists such as Sir Francis Dashwood in the eighteenth century is that it is impossible to be certain that these Ranters were mocking Christianity. The Ranter who said that "the Divil was nothing but the backside of God"[88] was probably just as sincere as Clarkson, who genuinely believed that "Light and Darkness are both alike", so that therefore "Devil is God, Hell is Heaven, Sin Holiness, Damnation Salvation" (p. 315).

Fox records the Quakers' difficulty in refuting the Ranters' similar argument that God made the Devil, which converted a number of Quakers to Ranterism in 1663.[89] The sceptical element of Ranterism remained as a mood of disaffection, which subjected traditional religious values to the scrutiny of a hostile, rationalist ideology. In the mood of disillusion which prevailed after the Restoration, the libertine was primarily a sceptic rather than a fanatic.

No-one has argued more emphatically for the significance of the Ranters' behaviour than Christopher Hill. He says that the Revolutionary decades were a period when ordinary people were more free from the authority and moral supervision of church and social superiors than they had ever been before, or were to be for a long time again.[90] The Ranters made use of this freedom, and "systematically proclaimed the right of natural men to behave naturally".[91] The Restoration libertine echoed this proclamation, of course, but he was a member of a privileged class. The real significance of Ranterism is that it is the only mass outbreak of libertinism among the lower classes.* Hill sees its ethic as "a heroic effort to proclaim Dionysus in a world from which he was being driven, to reassert the freedom of the human body and of sexual relations against the mind-forged manacles which were being imposed".[92] The Ranters, he says:

> by rejecting sin, proclaiming free love and raising the matter as one for public rational discussion, went further than their predecessors could, and pushed through to a concept of the relation of the sexes which was more libertine than anything publicly defended hitherto ... Unfortunately Ranter theology

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*The motive for libertine behaviour in upper and lower classes alike was often a desire to shock the Puritan sense of propriety, of which they were equally contemptuous. This was particularly true of swearing. One tract, A Total Rout, or a Brief Discovery, of a Pack of Knaves and Drabs (1653) described the Ranters as "Princely Hectors of the Town" who "sweared Dammee at every word". The Cavaliers were known to their opponents as the "Dammees" (Hill, Society and Puritanism (1964), p. 406)

> leapt ahead of the technical possibilities of their society: equal sexual freedom for both sexes had to wait for cheap and effective methods of birth control.[93]

Whether or not one accepts these observations as having validity, the Ranters remain the last and most important manifestation of libertinism in its religious phase, from which it was but a short step to the denial of religion itself.

So effectively were the Ranters suppressed and absorbed that their writings, apart from those extracts reprinted by Cohn, have lain neglected to this day, despite their considerable literary merit. If the modern student of English has heard of them at all, it is most likely to be through Butler's Characters. Here, then, is another case of the victim being preserved for posterity by the satirist, a phenomenon which was to occur with increasing frequency as satire grew in popularity. Though the victims appear insignificant to us now, they were usually chosen because they constituted a real threat to the moral standards which the satirist espoused. Butler's were no exception, and his Characters, written mostly between 1667 and 1669, but a good many in the 1650's, provide a useful guide to what that sceptical Anglican Royalist considered the great enemies of his society. Although there were few Ranters extant by the time Butler was writing about them they were no doubt still very much alive in the public memory. Certainly Thomas Venner's Fifth Monarchy revolt of 1661 would not soon be forgotten: it was celebrated in ballads during the 1670's. For example, Another Ballad called the Libertines Lampoone: or the Curvets of Conscience (1674), "by the Author of the Geneva Ballad", goes "To the Tune of Thomas Venner, or 60".[94] Its attribution to Butler in the Luttrell

Collection seems to depend on the erroneous assumption that Butler was the author of The Geneva Ballad (1674), which also has references to Knipperdollink, the Ranters, the Brownists and other extreme sectaries.[95]

In his Satyr upon the licentious age of Charles the 2d., contrasted with the puritanical one that preceded it, Butler associates the Cavaliers, who had been known to their enemies in the Civil War as the "Dammees",[96] with their fanatical opponents:

> And yet how expressive and significant,
> In Damme at once to curse, and swear, and rant?
> As if no way exprest Mens Souls so well,
> As damning of them to the Pit of Hell; ...[97]

Butler's characterisation of the new breed of rakehells as Ranters was apt, and indicates the more conscious revolt against religion that their behaviour entailed, in defying Hell-fire and damnation. The term "Ranter" combines the sense of "a noisy, riotous, dissipated fellow - a rake" with bombastic utterance, especially in preaching, but also in the theatre. After the Restoration, rakes tended to use the rant of heroic drama rather than that of mystical enthusiasm, although satirists used both to discredit libertines.

Butler attacks libertines in the language of the fanatical sects, with whom he links them by means of innuendo and plentiful wit. The most comprehensive of his Characters satirises the avarice, pride and ambition of "A Modern Politician", who is also an antinomian Hobbist hypocrite, with a libertine attitude to honour, in addition to the traditional vices which Cowley exposed. These libertine elements, which will be elucidated separately in subsequent chapters, are rarely found all together in quite the same way. "A Modern Politician" serves as a useful introduction to them. The influence

of Butler's prose style, on Swift particularly, is apparent in this passage, where his choice of "fruition" as the basic metaphor in a parody of the popular conception of Epicureanism enables him to ridicule middle-class acquisitiveness as well:

> ... for Fruition without Desire is but a dull Entertainment; and that Pleasure only real and substantial, that provokes and improves the Appetite, and increases in the Enjoyment ... the plain downright Pleasure of Gaining is greater and deserves to be preferred far before all the various Delights of Spending, which the Curiosity, Wit, or Luxury of Mankind in all Ages could ever find out. (p. 31)

The metaphor is still intact in the final paragraph, which raises further libertine themes:

> What he gains wickedly he spends as vainly; for he holds it the greatest Happiness that a Man is capable of, to deny himself nothing, that his Desires can propose to him, but rather to improve his Enjoyments by glorying in his Vices: for Glory being one End of almost all the Business of this World, he who omits that in the Enjoyment of himself and his Pleasures, loses the greatest Part of his Delight. And therefore the Felicity, which he supposes other Men apprehend that he receives in the Relish of his Luxuries, is more delightful to him than the Fruition itself. (p. 45)

One has to wait until Mandeville for a comparably witty treatment of the theme of luxury. Butler's politician is a good example of his ability to pack his Characters full of epigrammatic exaggeration. Although their superiority in the genre was never seriously challenged by subsequent exponents, they pointed one of the main directions which attacks on the Restoration libertines would take in the decades which followed.

CHAPTER II THE PREMISES OF RESTORATION LIBERTINISM

1 Le libertinage

In the mid-sixteenth century the word libertin was applied exclusively to the Protestant sect, prevalent in the Low Countries and northern France, which Calvin attacked in Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des Libertins qui se nomment spirituelz (1545).[1] On the basis of such texts as "in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts, xvii, 28) they believed that a divine spirit causes and permeates all things, so therefore all that is is good. The radical implications of this mystical pantheism included the sharing of property and women. Their successors in the non-religious phase of libertinism are Vanini, and the French group of libertin poets of whom the best is Théophile de Viau. Italian naturalistic philosophy rather than Christianity provided the basis for Vanini's distinctive form of pantheism. Théophile's call to follow nature, which was both pantheistic and mystical, was accompanied by blasphemy and licentiousness.

The existence of a sceptical, anti-clerical undercurrent has already been noted in libertinism's religious phase. This element became much stronger in France in the late sixteenth century. It was scepticism which was emphasised by Geoffroy Vallée, an important ancestor of the libertin poets, in one of the earliest definitions of the new libertinism. This occurs in La Béatitude

des Chrestiens, ou le Fléo de la Foy (1573), an ironic "character" book of the type which was to become common in the next century:

> Le libertin ne croit ni ne nie, ne se fie ni se doute entièrement, ce qui le rend toujours sceptique; il peut aborder, s'il est bien instruit ou s'il médite souvent, à plus heureux port que tous les autres qui croient (pourvu qu'il ait passé par la Huguenoterie), d'autant qu'il s'élève davantage en discernement que le Papiste.[2]

It was this independence of mind, particularly regarding orthodox Christian doctrine, which distinguished the new form of libertinism from the heresies of the medieval and Reformation eras. The impetus for it was provided by the challenge that sceptical modes of thought were making on Aristotelianism. Depending on the individual, the response might vary from a humanist fideism to the all-embracing system of doubt known as Pyrrhonism, or it might express itself in a more militant form as pantheistic naturalism or satire.

The father of libertinism in its sceptical aspect was Montaigne, whose Essais also contain the seeds of its other two components, naturalism and Epicureanism. The Essais and his follower Charron's De la Sagesse gave widespread currency to the Pyrrhonism of Cornelius Agrippa and Sextus Empiricus, and almost all subsequent libertine writers followed them in distinguishing between religion and ethics. Their sceptical descendants in the early seventeenth century include the libertins érudits, scholars of impeccable credentials such as Gabriel Naudé, Guy Patin, Leonard de Marandé, François de la Mothe Le Vayer, Pierre Gassendi and Samuel Sorbière, most of whom, through offices secured by Richelieu and Mazarin, belonged to the intellectual circles in and around the Palace.

The words libertin and libertinage had been in usage in the sense of "free-thinker" and "free thought" long before they were included in the Dictionary of the Jesuit Philibert Monet in 1635.[3] But from the first, its opponents had assumed that free thought necessitated free living. Bayle, in Pensées sur la comète de 1680 (1682) made the revolutionary contention that speculative beliefs are independent of morals, and vice versa, so that an atheist might be an honest man and a superstitious man a villain:

> Le détestable Vanini qui fut brûlé à Toulouse pour son athéisme l'an 1619 avoit toujours été assez réglé dans ses moeurs et quiconque eût entrepris de lui faire un procès criminel sur toute autre chose que sur ses dogmes auroit couru grand risque d'être convaincu de calomnie.[4]

But Bayle's efforts on his behalf had little noticeable effect either on Vanini's reputation or on that of libertinage, and the word had become so much associated with loose morals in the public mind that it had lost its philosophic sense by the end of the century. Bayle's term libertin d'esprit never gained currency, and this meaning was supplied by libre penseur (translated from the English "free-thinker"), or, later, by philosophe. The standard scholarly work on the period is entitled Le libertinage érudit,[5] to distinguish respectable thinkers such as Gassendi from the debauchees. These learned sceptics were restrained in expressing their views, as well as discreet in their manners, but their positions as librarians and tutors in the houses of the aristocracy meant that they were in any case fairly safe from the danger of persecution.

This was certainly not true of those who professed pantheistic naturalism (or "atheism", as it was then termed). These libertines tended to be poor, rootless, independent, unashamedly opposed to authority, and often immoral.[6] Vallée, burned for heresy in 1574, just when the Familists were starting to appear in England, can be seen as the descendant of the heretics of the Free Spirit; as well as the precursor of Vanini, burned for "atheism" in 1619, or of Théophile, who narrowly escaped a similar fate in 1625. Whereas the sceptics were conservative intellectuals, the naturalists were radicals, and were considered much more dangerous. Their successors later in the century include Cyrano de Bergerac[7] and Molière, through whom their ideas were disseminated widely in England. There is also evidence that some English libertines, notably Rochester, themselves had direct knowledge of the libertin poets.* In Rochester's case, these included some of the most notorious: Des Barreaux; Saint-Pavin, who was known as Roi de Sodome; and two other self-proclaimed sodomites, Claude de Chouvigny, and Claude Le Petit, burned in 1662.

Vanini's first work displays a craving for unity, simplicity and logical consistency, the hallmarks, it has been argued, of a radical thinker.[8] Some indication of its contents appears in the title, Amphitheatrum aeternae providentiae divino-magicum, christiano-physicum, nec non astrologo-catholicum, adversus veteres philosophos, atheos, Epicurios, Peripateticos at Stoicos (Lyons, 1615). Vanini rejects materialistic explanations of the universe

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*See below, Chapter IV, pp.202,221.

(as did Théophile) in favour of a pantheistic mysticism. As Voltaire was later to point out, Vanini was not an atheist in the strict sense of one who denies the existence of God. In his system, although God created Nature, no distinction between God and Nature is really necessary. His view of Nature as the manifestation of God is essentially akin to that of the Italian philosophers of the previous century, and it reappears with a Neoplatonic basis in Henry Vaughan's similar notion of nature as a divine hieroglyph. However, Vanini's second book, De admirandis naturae reginaeque, deaeque mortalium arcanis (Paris, 1616), is written in a jocular tone, and contains several indiscretions, which the zealots of Toulouse were quick to seize upon. The fierce attack on Vanini by Père Garasse in La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps (1623) was to set the tone for many others, before Bayle saw fit to defend his reputation in 1682.

Garasse's two works, La Doctrine curieuse and Les Recherches des recherches et autres oeuvres de M. Etienne Pasquier ... (1622) formed the spearhead of the Jesuits' reaction against an army, of which Vanini and Théophile were only a part. About 1622 there appeared a didactic poem entitled L'Anti-Bigot ou le faux dévotieux, generally called the Quatrains du Déiste, which directly and consistently expressed the attitude to life implicit in Théophile's poetry. If they are correctly attributed to Claude Bélurgey, Professor of Philosophy at the Collège de Navarre in Paris, the Quatrains link the academic world with a larger educated public. The poem drew forth a lengthy reply from Marin Mersenne, L'Impiété des déistes, athées et libertins de ce temps (1624), a much more restrained Jesuit contribution to the controversy than the violent polemics of Garasse.

Théophile advocated following the laws of nature, but he denied that he was a worshipper of nature, or that he taught men to live like the beasts, when both accusations were brought against him at his lengthy trial. He believed, with the Stoics, that virtue and courage could raise man to the level of the gods, and that only by following nature could man achieve his true potential, since the divine spark in his soul was dulled by the servile imitation society required. Théophile and his fellow poets expressed the radical implications of these ideas in scornful and blasphemous attacks on the respective social and intellectual domination of the nobility and the church. They themselves cultivated independence. They eschewed the gallantry of Paris society, and instead haunted taverns and wrote licentious verses. Most of the lyric poets in seventeenth century France were _libertins_: light verse was one of those minor genres which was almost by definition libertine. The nearest equivalent in English literature is the songs and lampoons of the Court Wits after the Restoration. It is easy to see why the _Parlements_ regarded the _libertin_ poets as a threat, in a way that the Court Wits never were, since the latter were a part of the aristocracy rather than a challenge to it. Cyrano, influenced by the Italian naturalist Campanella, and by Gassendi, is in this radical tradition, though his subversion is less bitter, more gentle and witty, and he works usually in a different genre. Molière, the humanist, exercising his wit in the complex medium of drama, even numbers some of the constituents of libertinism amongst the victims of his satire.

The persecutions of Vallée and others for "atheism" were typical instances of the régime's intolerance of that anti-clericalism which we have already seen to be an accompaniment of libertinism, and they were followed by numerous subsequent reminders that dissent could not be regarded lightly. The rigid censorship laws and the consequent danger of prosecution made it necessary for the libertine to write "cachant sa dissidence sous un sourir évasif".[9] Even in the salons, heterodox opinions were tolerated only if they were cleverly concealed, so that here irony flourished, a discreet pleasure, savoured in the intimate circle of the "happy few". Their values were aristocratic, like those of the Court Wits, and later the Augustan circle of Pope, Gay, Swift and Arbuthnot. One of the most prominent habitués of the salons, where many English Royalists were to be found in the years before the Restoration, was St. Evremond. Himself an exile in England for most of his career, he played an important part in bringing the values of the salons into English life. He also contributed greatly to the rehabilitation of Epicurus, strengthened in France in 1626 by Gassendi, who had felt the need for a more positive creed than scepticism, and who in formulating the new Epicureanism had added the third strand to libertinism.[10]

2 French influence in England

The influence of the French <u>libertins</u> was extended to England in two main ways: through Charles II's court, and through the theatres. Among those exiled with Charles prior to 1660 were Clarendon, and the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, as well as

Anthony Hamilton, to whom we are indebted for much gossip about both French and English court circles at this time.[11] Evelyn notes crowds of exiled Royalists in France in an entry in his Diary dated 1 September 1650.[12] Hobbes, Buckingham, Denham, Shirley, Waller, Lovelace, Cowley and Etherege were all there at some time during these years. After the Restoration this French connection was maintained: for example, communication with France improved (a postal service was established),[13] and the trade in books increased.[14] Pepys tells us that the Royal household was actually modelled on the French one,[15] and we may be sure that the courtiers were enthusiastic popularisers of French fashions. Such influence did not go uncriticised: the author of Christianissimus Christianandus or Reason for the Reduction of France to a more Christian State in Europe (1678) regrets the dominance of "French language and Humors", and sees it as "a sad Omen of Universal Slavery". (p. 37) Similar evidence is to be found in the Calendar of State Papers Domestic (31 December 1660 (p. 428), 11 October 1666, 7 November 1673).

It was the satirists who were most vociferous in defending native English manners and customs against the invasion. In his Satire upon Our Ridiculous Imitation of the French, written in the early 1670's, Butler laments that we:

> '... see one nation go to school
> And learn of another, like a fool.
> To study all its tricks and fashions
> With epidemic affectations,
> And dare to wear no mode or dress
> But what they in their wisdom please,
> As monkeys are by being taught
> To put on gloves and stockings caught;
> Submit to all that they devise,
> As if it wore their liveries;
> Make ready and dress th'imagination

> Not with the clothes, but with the fashion,
> And change it (to fulfil the curse
> Of Adam's Fall) for new, though worse: ... (ll. 5-18)[16]

In the early 1680's Oldham satirises the ridiculous affectation of French manners in A Satire, in Imitation of the Third of Juvenal,[17] and his anonymous admirer wishes in A Satyr against the French (1691) that he had been spared, because "Thy Satyr, Oldham, would have scar'd 'em more/Than did our Arms their Fathers heretofore." Even in the later years of the century this French influence was still marked. Tom Brown quotes a French author (perhaps Balzac) who writes in a letter "To Monsieur de A-, at Paris": "If the People of London talk'd French, a Man would almost fancy himself in the midst of France." The resemblance is especially true regarding dress; he concludes: "and bating a few Things, the Manner of living is the same."[18] It also figured in a famous literary quarrel of the age. Sir Richard Blackmore in 1699 blamed "the Poets who ... hold with France for Wit an Owling Trade." He specifically singled out Garth's Dispensary, which borrowed from Boileau's Lutrin:

> Felonius Garth pursuing this Design,
> Smuggles French Wit, as others Silks and Wine.[19]

To Blackmore and his followers, "wit" was synonymous with licentiousness.

The Court was closely interested in the stage, and Charles sent Thomas Betterton, one of England's leading actors, who was later to play Don John in Shadwell's The Libertine, to study the French stage, a visit which resulted in an improvement in stage décor.[20] Davenant, the manager, was much influenced by the French, and Betterton, an actor in his company, was lavishly praised by

Cibber, who compared him to Baron, the comedian of Molière's troupe.[21] Pepys and Evelyn both refer to the visit of French troupes to England as early as 1661.[22] At first they were not well received, but the strong adherents of continental culture at the English Court, such as Sedley and Buckhurst, reacted with enthusiasm, and very soon the tastes of English theatre audiences turned towards the French, and Molière in particular. Etherege's first play, The Comical Revenge (1664), clearly shows the influence of this new school of French comedy. French theatrical influence did not go uncriticised either, most notably by Dryden in Of Dramatic Poesy (1668), and in the Prefaces to The Wild Gallant (1669) and An Evening's Love (1671);[23] though his Sir Martin Mar-All (1668), which borrowed the material but not much wit from Molière, was one of the most popular plays of the age. Its popularity is evidence of the preference of the Restoration audience for farce and sure-fire comic situations rather than sophisticated wit.

Molière provided the greatest single French influence on Restoration comedy. Most of his plays were adapted for the English stage, and John Wilcox found that nearly one in five of the thirty-eight plays which he examined had some connection with Molière.[24] There is some justification for Perrens's description of Molière as "a libertin to the marrow",[25] although his first biographer's story that Molière, together with Chapelle, Bernier, Cyrano and Dehénault, attended private lessons given by Gassendi, is almost certainly exaggerated.[26] He is said to have favoured Epicurus's morals, whilst rejecting his system of physics. However,

he undoubtedly began a translation of Lucretius before 1659, which perhaps implies a certain sympathy.[27] But before going on to examine in greater detail the case for Molière being one of the main vehicles for the transposition of libertinage into Restoration libertinism, it is first necessary to define the latter more closely.

3 The existing scholarship

Although it forms the main subject of only one chapter, the most ambitious attempt to define libertinism is Dale Underwood's Etherege and the Seventeenth Century Comedy of Manners (1957), which characterises as primarily libertine the convictions and temper of the society depicted in the Restoration comedy of manners:

> All these characteristics - the antirationalism; the "Epicureanism"; the opposition of nature and custom; the revolt against the latter in the name of nature, freedom, pleasure; the naturalistic concept of love, with here an especial emphasis upon freedom; the particular and consequent revolt against marriage and the more conventional attitudes toward love in general - these constitute basic aspects of a form of libertinism reflected not only in the Restoration comedy of manners but in literature of the Restoration and seventeenth century at large.[28]

At least three philosophic lines of thought are involved here: Epicureanism; scepticism; and primitivism or naturalism. I will refer to these strands individually in subsequent discussion, for the sake of convenience, but it is important to recognise that they had become thoroughly blurred, and, as Underwood says, their intermingling is as important for libertinism as their individual sources.

Underwood examines the intellectual milieu of the plays, which he sees as embodying a conflict between the libertine philosophy and those of moderation and complaisance. This is an oversimplification, but the main reason why the solidity of the creed which he calls libertinism tends to crumble during the course of his analysis of it is because his initial premises are so very wide, including too many diverse elements:

> The society of Restoration comedy of manners may be viewed as in large part the product of two broadly opposing sets of traditions: on the one hand Christianity and Christian humanism, the "heroic" tradition, the honest-man tradition, and the tradition of courtly love; on the other, philosophic and moral libertinism, Machievellian and Hobbesian concepts as to the nature of man, and Machievellian ethics. (p. 8)

But the very nature of the subject makes succinctness well nigh impossible. Certainly, none of the other attempts to describe the libertine ethic on the basis of an oversimplified intellectual milieu (such as, for example, T.H. Fujimura's <u>The Restoration Comedy of Wit</u>, where Hobbes is central to the analysis) are any more helpful.

Of Underwood's three strands, only Epicureanism readily lends itself to a survey treatment. Of the other two, naturalism is of so many different kinds as almost to belie generalisation; while primitivism, far from being a part of libertine naturalism, can often more usefully be seen as a component of an antithetical tradition including pastoral and nostalgic romanticism, although it does also occur in conjunction with Epicureanism. As for scepticism, its presence in writers of the Restoration and

eighteenth century becomes the norm rather than the exception, and would consequently require far more space than this study could give it. I shall therefore concentrate on clarifying the Epicurean elements, indicating naturalistic arguments and sceptical attitudes where they are relevant to a particular writer under discussion.

Robert J. Jordan, in his unpublished doctoral thesis "The Libertine Gentleman in Restoration Comedy" (London, 1965) looks directly at the plays. Concentrating on the rakes' intellectual ideals rather than their actions, he finds that most rakes fall into one of two categories: the "extravagant" or the "judicious", which he at one point tentatively suggests may correspond with the pleasures of motion and rest respectively.[29] The rake's three principal ideals are wit, honour and pleasure. These are precisely the false ideals which Robert Gould attributes to "those Fops that seldom mind the Play", in the section of his satire, The Play-House, which deals with the audience:

> Touching their Cuffs, or treading on their Toe,
> With many other things, too small to name,
> Does blow the Sparks of Honour to a flame;
> For such vile trifles, or some viler Drab,
> They roar, they swear, look big, lug out and stab.[30]

The difficulty here is that most of these sort of rakes feel no need for philosophic justification, and are mere heedless sensualists; but even if they are not that, they are primarily active rather than introspective and reflective, so that their opinions, such as they are, tend to be fragmentary and occasional, strands of thought rather than total philosophies. Jordan asks to what extent they recur, are consistent, fragments

of broader based philosophies, and significant for the plays as a whole. So as not to duplicate this work, when dealing with the drama I have drawn most of my examples from tragedy, where the libertines, though rarer, tend to be more thoroughgoing. Here wit is not so important as in the comedies, so this element, which really requires a separate study all to itself, has been largely excluded from the present one. As for honour, the argument between libertine and chivalric representatives of honour plays quite an important part in the drama, notably for example in Dryden's heroic plays. This interest overflows into satiric poetry, besides being acted out in real life by the Court Wits, in their belief that the honour of a mistress should be respected by secrecy, and their own or a friend's defended in a duel. It has been possible to do little more than touch on this, however, since my thesis concerns primarily libertine ideas about pleasure. The ideals of wit and honour must await a fuller treatment elsewhere.

4 Don Juan: Molière and Shadwell

Shadwell, whose comedies Jordan makes a test case for his ideas on the two categories of rake, has been considered quite a reliable barometer of public taste.[31] His popular success was often due to a shrewd awareness, in his choice of material for adaptation, of what the audience wanted. He must have been confident that his adoption of the Don Juan theme for his tragedy The Libertine would provide him with a sure-fire hit, as its first performance in June 1675[32] coincides with the height of the interest in libertinism in

England. Molière's Dom Juan is primarily the vehicle for some fairly subtle satire on religious hypocrisy. A comparison between the two treatments of the theme shows how much grosser audiences' tastes became during a period of about ten years. In addition, besides showing the difference between the two authors' treatment of libertinism, it is indicative, on a wider level, of French and English society's attitudes to heterodoxy. More important, Don John's thoroughness in voicing and practising his code makes The Libertine a locus classicus for Restoration libertinism.

Each age has adapted the Don Juan theme to its own obsessions: for example, for the nineteenth century he became the romantic hero, for the twentieth the victim of alienation. But these were later embellishments on what was, ever since his emergence in literature in the work of Tirso do Molina the Spaniard in 1632, his dominant passion, love - or lust. He passed into the repertoire of the Commedia dell'Arte companies of the mid-century, where new incidents were added. Part of the scenario for one of these, which was performed at the theatre where Molière's company was working in 1658, still survives, and no doubt influenced his play. Other versions of the story by Dorimon and Villiers had already endowed Don Juan with contemporary libertin traits. Molière went much further in pursuing the theme of atheism, and in basing his characters on living models. His Dom Juan is far removed from the headstrong young sensualist of Tirso, and has been described as "the examplar of a certain type of corrupt, unprincipled nobleman of Molière's own time".[33] The sort of man Molière may have used

as a model for this aspect of his satire was the Prince de Conti, an example of a type of loose-living free-thinker who sought the advantage of a feigned conversion. Certainly, Dom Juan's libertinism is presented as an aristocratic code. His father tries to tell him that he is abusing his position: "a gentleman who lives an evil life is an offence against nature, a monster, and ... virtue is the first title to nobility".[34] Similarly, the credulous servant of Dona Elvira, one of Dom Juan's victims, asks: "But how could a gentleman do such a vile thing ?" (I i p. 200) To that Dom Juan's servant Sganarelle replies: "Ay, ay ! A lot of difference that makes, his being a gentleman ! I can see that stopping him from doing anything he wants to do !" This is in the first scene, and a few lines later he concludes his key portrait of his master by explaining why he continues to serve him: "a nobleman who has given himself over to wickedness is a thing to be dreaded". (p. 201) He remains where he is through fear.

In this character sketch Sganarelle shows us Molière's priorities, in making Dom Juan's pursuit of his sensual appetites take second place to the intellectual <u>libertinage</u> which is the basis of his character:

> ... in my master, Dom Juan, you see the biggest scoundrel that ever cumbered the earth, a madman, a cur, a devil, a Turk, a heretic who believes neither in Heaven, Hell nor werewolf: he lives like an animal, like a swine of an Epicurean, a veritable Sardanapalus,* shutting his ears to every Christian remonstrance, and turning to ridicule everything we believe in. (p. 200)

Only after this does he turn to Dom Juan's use of marriage as a technique to ensnare women of all varieties, a technique which we

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* A common <u>exemplum</u> of libertinism - See below, Chapter V, pp. 260-2.

see in action later when he promises marriage to two sisters simultaneously. The other servant, to whom Sganarelle tells this, finds it hard to believe that Dom Juan is not bound by "the obligations of holy matrimony". Sganarelle later attempts to tax his master with this:

SGANARELLE. But, if I might make use of the liberty you've given me, master, I must say I am very much shocked at the life you are leading.

DOM JUAN. Indeed ! And what sort of life am I leading ?

SGANARELLE. Oh ! It's a very good life, only --- to see you marrying afresh every month or two as you are doing ...

DOM JUAN. Well, what could be more agreeable ?

SGANARELLE. I admit it may be very agreeable --- and very amusing. I wouldn't mind doing the same myself if there were no harm in it, but you know, sir, to trifle like that with a holy sacrament, and ...

DOM JUAN. Get along with you ! That's a matter for Heaven and myself to settle between us without your worrying about it.

SGANARELLE. Upon my word, master, I've always heard tell it was a bad thing to mock at Heaven, and that unbelievers came to no good.

DOM JUAN. Now then, my dear blockhead, remember what I have told you --- I don't like being preached at.

SGANARELLE. I am not referring to you, God forbid ! You know what you are doing, you do. If you don't believe in anything, well, you have your own reasons, but there are some silly fellows who are unbelievers without knowing why; they think it smart to set themselves up as free thinkers. If I had a master like that, I would ask him straight to his face, "How dare you set yourself up against Heaven as you do ? Aren't you afraid to mock at sacred things ? What right have you, you little worm, pygmy that you are (I'm talking to the imaginary master), to make a jest of everything that people hold sacred ? Do you think because you are a gentleman and wear a fashionable wig, because you have feathers in your hat, and gilt lace on your

> coat and flame-coloured ribbons (of course, I'm not talking to you) --- do you think that you are any the wiser for that, and that you can do as you like and nobody is going to dare to tell you the truth ? (pp. 203-4)

Sganarelle is buffoon and moralist combined. When he voices the orthodox view that "sooner or later Heaven punishes the wicked, and those who live evil lives come to bad ends", his master finally tells him to "shut up !" (I i, p. 204).

Dom Juan is outrageously sceptical about medicine (a pet hate of Molière's) and religion. After denying Heaven, Hell, the Devil and so on, he is asked by Sganarelle what he does believe in. He answers: "I believe that two and two make four, Sganarelle, and that two fours are eight",* to which Sganarelle replies: "Now that <u>is</u> a fine sort of faith. As far as I can see, then, your religion's arithmetic". (III i, p. 223) However, Dona Elvira's brothers' outmoded assertions that "Honour is more precious than life" and that "reason, not blind rage, inspires us" (III i, pp. 228, 229) are presented in an equally ridiculous light. Molière, the humanist, makes us laugh at extremes of both credulity and scepticism, of courtly chivalry and Machievellian libertinism.

In the early part of the play, Dom Juan assumes, when it suits him, the role of "honest man". An example is his blunt rejection of Dona Elvira, which provokes her to tax him sarcastically with failing to make use of his courtier's training to invent gentlemanly excuses for his treatment of her. This makes all the more devastating his conscious assumption of the role of hypocrite

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* Guez de Balzac and Tallemant des Réaux report that these were the dying words of a foreign nobleman, reputed to be Maurice of Nassau, who died in 1625. There were a number of noblemen who professed their unbelief in a similarly militant fashion, as opposed to maintaining the open-minded acquiescence of La Mothe Le Vayer or Naudé. See Spink, <u>French Free-thought</u>, p. 27.

when it occurs in Act V. The opening sentence of his justification is echoed in Rochester's bitter outcry a few years later about "Hypocrisie being the only Vice in decay amongst us".* According to Dom Juan it was not in decay yet:

> Such conduct carries no stigma nowadays, for hypocrisy is a fashionable vice, and all vices pass for virtues once they become fashionable. The role of a man of principle is the best of all parts to play, for the professional hypocrite enjoys remarkable advantages. Hypocrisy is an art, the practice of which always commands respect, and though people may see through it they dare say nothing against it. All other vices are exposed to censure and anyone may attack them with impunity. Hypocrisy alone is privileged. It stills the voice of criticism and enjoys a sovereign immunity ... How many men have I seen contrive to repair the disorders of their youth in this way, making religion a cloak under which they continued to live as wickedly as they pleased ! People may be aware of their machinations, they may even recognise them for what they are, but they are not held in less regard on that account. They bow their heads from time to time, heave an occasional sigh of mortification, roll their eyes to Heaven now and again, and that atones, in the eyes of the world, for anything they may do. It is under the shelter of this pretence I intend to take refuge and secure my own position. I shall not abandon my pleasures but I shall be at pains to conceal them and amuse myself with all circumspection. So, if by chance I am discovered, the whole fraternity will make my cause their own and defend me against every criticism. By this means I shall contrive to do whatever I choose with impunity. I shall set up as a censor of the behaviour of others,

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* Cf. also Butler's allegation that a Ranter "is but an Hypocrite turned the wrong Side outward; ..." (See above, Chapter I, p.37) Dorset, Etherege and other wits, as good satirists, also attack hypocrisy. Dorset's Epilogue to Molière's own Tartuffe (see below, Chapter IV, p.241) is rivalled in its intensity only by Robert Gould's exaggeration of Rochester's Satyr against Mankind:

> So of Religion, the bold Atheist, who
> Says there's no God, though impious and untrue,
> Is better than the Hypocrite, whose zeal
> Is but a Cloak the Villain to conceal.
> . . . . . .
> In short, there's nothing, be it ne'r so ill,
> To Ravish, Cheat, Forswear, to Bugger, Kill,
> But, if 'tis vail'd with a Religious Dress,
> Is meritorious, Vertue, Godliness. (Poems (1689), pp. 204-5)

Cf. Chapter IV, pp.194, 201-2.

> condemn everyone, and hold a good opinion of no one, myself alone excepted. Let anyone offend me in however slight a degree, I shall never forgive, but steadfastly nurse an implacable enmity. I shall constitute myself the avenger and servant of the Lord and use that convenient pretext as a means of harassing my enemies. I shall accuse them of impiety and find means to turn loose on them the officious zealots who will raise a public outcry against them without even knowing what it is about, overwhelm them with recriminations and damn them roundly on their own private authority. Thus one may profit from human frailty; thus a wise man may accommodate himself to the vices of the age. (pp. 243-4)

He immediately uses this pose to explain to her brothers why he may not marry Dona Elvira; and, unlike most libertines in real life, he refuses to repent. Almost his last words are: "No, come what may it shall never be said that I am the repenting sort." (p 246) In other words there is truly a dramatic as well as a satirical dimension to the way in which Dom Juan's exploits are presented.

> It has been said of his achievement in this play that:
>
> Molière is demonstrating the insidious charm of these noblemen with their fine manners, their freedom from prejudice and convention, seeking only the gratification of their desire; and when he wants to show that for all their charm, they were a pernicious and a dangerous element in society, this can only be done by <u>dramatic</u> not by comic means.[35]

It is this dramatic involvement of the audience which sets Molière's treatment of the theme above Shadwell's, whose satire is much more heavy-handed. Shadwell's libertine is always too exaggerated to enlist anything like sympathy from an audience. But neither does Molière neglect the more stereotypical elements of Dom Juan's humour:

> I must have freedom in love, as you know. I cannot resign myself to confining my heart within four walls. I have often told you that my natural propensity is to follow my fancy wherever it may lead. My heart belongs to all womankind. It is theirs to take in turn and keep as long as they can. (III i, p. 230)

This is the voice of Don Juan the eternal lover, for whom variety and the pleasures of the chase are everything. His sophisticated delineation of the aesthetics of seduction is a far cry from Shadwell's crude rapists, and perhaps the most detailed justification of this aspect of libertinism to be found in print:

> What ! Would you have a man tie himself up to the first woman that captured his fancy, renounce the world for her, and never again look at anyone else ? That is a fine idea, I must say, to make a virtue of faithfulness, to bury oneself for good and all in one single passion and remain blind ever after to all the other beauties that may catch one's eye ! No ! Let fools make a virtue of constancy ! All beautiful women have a right to our love, and the accident of being the first comer shouldn't rob others of a fair share in our hearts. As for me, beauty delights me wherever I find it and I freely surrender myself to its charms. No matter how far I'm committed --- the fact that I am in love with one person shall never make me unjust to the others. I keep an eye for the merits of all of them and render each one the homage, pay each one the tribute that nature enjoins. Come what may, I cannot refuse love to what I find lovable, and so, when a beautiful face is asking for love, if I had ten thousand hearts I would freely bestow every one of them. After all, there is something inexpressibly charming in falling in love and, surely, the whole pleasure lies in the fact that love isn't lasting. How delightful, how entrancing it is to lay siege with a hundred attentions to a young woman's heart; to see, day by day, how one makes slight advances; to pit one's exaltation, one's sighs and one's tears, against the modest reluctance of a heart unwilling to yield; to surmount, step by step, all the little barriers by which she resists; to overcome her proud scruples and bring her at last to consent. But once one succeeds, what else remains ? What more can one wish for ? All that delights one in passion is over and one can only sink into a tame and slumbrous affection --- until a new love comes along to awaken desire and offer the charm of new conquests. There is no pleasure to compare with the conquest of beauty, and my ambition is that of all the great conquerors who could never find it in them to set bounds to their ambitions, but must go on forever from conquest to conquest. Nothing can restrain my impetuous desires. I feel it is in me to love the whole world, and like Alexander still wish for new worlds to conquer. (I i, pp. 202-3)

His insatiability is the tragic flaw which makes Dom Juan's destruction dramatically inevitable. Molière captures here more realistically

than Butler or Rochester, and more subtly than Shadwell's "humour" approach, the pathological nature of Don Juan's fear of "fruition",* with his psychological need to keep making new conquests.

In 1669 Claude la Rose, Sieur de Rosimond, brought out Le Nouveau Festin de Pierre, ou l'Athée foudroyé, which he claims in his self-effacing preface to be an up-dating of Molière's play. Many scenes are identical, apart from being in rather poor rhymed verse. His main innovation was to provide Don Juan with a pair of companions as wicked as himself, an inspiration which Shadwell followed - indeed, Rosimond's play is Shadwell's primary source. One wishes that he had also followed Rosimond's example in admitting that his design was only to divert the audience,[36] for his own grandiose claims about the moral purpose of The Libertine seem far-fetched.+ Rosimond's other main contribution to the genre was to widen the discussion of Don Juan's misdeeds to include the whole spectrum of crime, another hint which Shadwell followed. One example is sufficient to show how far this Don Juan has developed from Molière's comparatively benign hero:

> Learn that there is no crime for a courageous man; only the cowardice of men gives it its odious name.‡ If all hearts were great and magnanimous, what is called crime would be crime no longer. It is all cowardice and timidity passing for virtue. A great man need not deny himself anything, and crime is virtue for whoever dares commit it.[37]

Admittedly, the three companions in Rosimond's play do not really live up to this code in their actions, which are not particularly

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*For Butler see above (Chapter 1, pp.67-8). Fruition is discussed in more detail in Chapter V, pp.288-9.

+See below, p.107.

‡Cf. Rochester's Hobbist in the Satyr: "all men would be cowards if they durst" and the orthodox reply (p.204 below).

spectacular. It is left to Shadwell to push the implications of such statements to their logical conclusion in creating from these hints "the strangest and wildest and most ferocious Don Juan of them all ... a seventeenth century Ubu Roi",[38] who, though an exaggerated caricature, makes philosophically explicit the hedonism expressed in Restoration comedy. The Libertine seems to have been adaptable enough for Shadwell's original scenario, which itself contains one or two songs, to have provided the basis both for a pantomime, and for an opera by Purcell; and in its various forms it remained popular until the third decade of the eighteenth century.

In this remarkable play Shadwell at once presents the audience with the customary libertine arguments (by now the height of fashion, thanks to the Court Wits), which will be seen to be discredited when they are later put into practice. Don John and his two companions justify their activities in terms of appeals to "Sense" and "Nature", at the same time denouncing "Reason", in the opening lines of the play:

DON ANTONIO: A senseless fear would make us contradict
The only certain Guide, Infallible Nature,
And at the call of Melancholy Fools
(Who style all actions which they like not, Sins),
To silence all our Natural appetites.
. . . . . .
By thee [i.e. Don John] we have got loose from Education
And the dull slavery of Pupillage,
Recover'd all the liberty of Nature;
Our own strong Reason now can go alone
Without the feeble props of splenetic Fools
Who contradict our common Mother, Nature.

DON JOHN: Nature gave us our Senses, which we please;
Nor does our Reason war against our Sense.
By Nature's order, Sense should guide our Reason,
Since to the mind all objects Sense conveys.
But Fools for shadows lose substantial pleasures,

For idle tales abandon true delight,
And solid joys of day, for empty dreams at night.
. . . . . .

DON ANTONIO: We live in the life of Sense, which no fantastic thing call'd Reason shall control.

DON LOPEZ: My reason tells me I must please my Sense.

DON JOHN: My appetites are all I'm sure I have from Heav'n, since they are Natural, and them I always will obey.
. . . . . .
Let's on, and live the noble life of Sense.*
To all the powers of Love and mighty Lust
In spite of formal Fops I will be just.
What ways soe're conduce to my delight,
My Sense instructs me, I must think 'em right.
On, on my Soul and make no stop in pleasure,
They're dull insipid Fools that live by measure.
(I i, pp. 25-8)[39]

Later Don John expresses to a discarded mistress the wish that women, like him, "wou'd be honest and follow the Dictates of Sense and Nature" (II i, p. 40). The Libertine therefore bears out Underwood's observation that two of the terms which conventional society characteristically applied to the libertine were "sensualist" and "naturalist". (p. 28) The third, "atheist", also plays a prominent role later on in the play.

The denigration of reason in the passage quoted above probably derives from Rochester's Satyr against Mankind, where man is described as "that vain animal/Who is so proud of being rational".[40] For such a man:

The senses are too gross, and he'll contrive
A sixth, to contradict the other five,
And before certain instinct, will prefer
Reason, which fifty times for one does err;
Reason, an ignis fatuus in the mind,
Which, leaving light of nature, sense, behind ... (ll. 8-13)

But the reason which Rochester's Hobbist speaker despises is that of the "formal band and beard" in the poem. This divine exalts

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* Cf. Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery (1684):
Now we the dictates of our sense pursue,
We study pleasures still and find out new. (IV i; Paris 1905, p. 37)

reason to ludicrous heights, as the gift of the Maker, who:

> ... this fair frame in shining reason dressed
> To dignify his nature above beast;
> Reason, by whose aspiring influence
> We take a flight beyond material sense, ... (ll. 64-7)

The speaker's own reply makes the distinction clear:

> Our sphere of action is life's happiness,
> And he who thinks beyond, thinks like an ass.
> Thus, whilst against false reasoning I inveigh,
> I own right reason, which I would obey:
> That reason which distinguishes by sense
> And gives us rules of good and ill from thence,
> That bounds desires with a reforming will
> To keep 'em more in vigor, not to kill.
> Your reason hinders, mine helps to enjoy,
> Renewing appetites yours would destroy.
> My reason is my friend, yours is a cheat;
> Hunger calls out, my reason bids me eat;
> Perversely, yours your appetite does mock:
> This asks for food, that answers, "What's o'clock ?" (ll. 96-109)

C.F. Main shows how this differs from both Hobbes's and Christian humanist definitions of "right reason"[41]. Shadwell is not concerned to make such neat distinctions, but tars all libertines with the same exaggeratedly antirational brush.

Shadwell is equally unsympathetic in his treatment of another important constituent of libertinism, the revolt against human laws and institutions, viewed by the libertine as at odds with Nature, since they curtail man's "natural" impulses and desires. Following Don John's announcement to the six women,* each of whom thinks she is his wife, that he has deceived them all, he urges his companions to sing his "Epithalamium". Part of it goes like this:

> Since Liberty, Nature for all has design'd,
> A pox on the Fool who to one is confin'd.

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*Cf. Philidor in James Howard's <u>All Mistaken, or The Mad Couple</u> (1672), who has promised marriage to six virgins (p. 18). He is probably the most explicitly presented rake in any of the comedies, and the play is unusual in that he and his "mad Mistress" both remain opposed to marriage at the end. Philidor has similarities with Don John.

All Creatures besides
When they please change their Brides.
All Females they get when they can,
Whilst they nothing but Nature obey.
How happy, how happy are they !
But the silly fond Animal, Man,
Makes Laws 'gainst himself, which his Appetites sway;
Poor Fools, how unhappy are they !

CHORUS: Since Liberty, Nature for all has design'd,
A pox on the Fool who to one is confin'd.
. . . . . .

Let the Rabble obey; I'll live like a Man,
Who by Nature is free to enjoy all he can:
Wise Nature does Teach
More truth than Fools Preach;
They bind us, but she gives us ease.
I'll revel, and love where I please.
She, she's my infallible Guide.
But were the Bless'd freedom deni'd
Of variety in the things we love best,
Dull Man were the slavishest Beast.

CHORUS: Let the Rabble obey, etc. (II i, pp. 43-4)

It is easy to see how the play lent itself to pantomime treatment.

Not to be outdone by the man in the play, who have achieved the freedom from restrictions characteristic of the animal world which they invoke as norm, the two sheltered daughters of Don Francisco long for a similar freedom:

Woman, who is by Nature wild,
Dull bearded men encloses;
Of Nature's freedom we're beguil'd
By Laws which man imposes.
Who still himself continues free,
Yet we poor Slaves must fetter'd be.

CHORUS: A shame on the Curse
Of, For better for worse;
'Tis a vile imposition on Nature;
For Women should change,
And have freedom to range,
Like to every other wild Creature ... (III iii, pp. 60-1)

Their impending fate at the hands of Don John, as well as being punishment for their blindness, is a timely reminder that the laws

they complain of are there to protect the weak from the strong who prey on them in the Hobbist state of nature. A bitter realisation of this is expressed in a poem entitled "The Femals Oppinion agt: Confinement":

> When once we yield, Men all their Vows Retract,
> And yet from us Fidelity Exact,
> Why should our Sex alone, be Close Confined,
> To one Man True, or els to all unkind.
>
> Let us our Favours generously bestow
> To all men Cruell, or to no man so,
> If we like Hunted Hares must be undone,
> Why not by the Whole Pack as well as One.[42]

Rochester's Valentinian provides another version of woman's demands for liberation based on experience (or wishful thinking).*

Many of the ideas which Shadwell's libertines express, including the revolt against conventional morality and laws, and the analogy with the beasts, are present in John Oldham's Satyr against Vertue (1679). The ranting hector who declaims it resembles Don John, and although the poem will be discussed in a later chapter,+ its opening will help us now to define the essence of libertine militancy:

> Now Curses on ye All ! ye Virtuous Fools,
> Who think to fetter free-born Souls,
> And tie 'em up to dull Morality and Rules,
> The Stagyrite be damn'd, and all the Crew,
> Of Learned Ideots, who his Steps pursue !
> . . . . . .
>
> But damn'd and more (if Hell can do't) be that thrice cursed Name,
> Who e'ere the Rudiments of Law design'd,
> Who e'ere did the first Model of Religion frame,
> And by that double Vassalage enthrall'd Mankind,
> By nought before but their own Pow'r or will confin'd:
> Now quite abridged of all their Primitive Liberty,

---

*See below, Chapter IV, pp.208-9.

+Chapter V, pp.263-71.

And Slaves to each capricious Monarch's Tyranny.
More happy Brutes ! who the great Rule of Sense observe,
And ne'er from their first Charter swerve.
Happy ! whose Lives are merely to enjoy,
And feel no Stings of Sin, which may their Bliss annoy.
Still unconcern'd at Epithets of Ill, or Good,
Distinctions unadult'rate Nature never understood.[43]

This exaggerated view of the libertine's Golden Age is alluded to in the opening lines of Absalom and Achitophel with a subtler irony.

The appeal here is to Natural Law, the "natural" condition of liberty, as opposed to the universal Law of Nature, Jus naturale, generally accepted by the orthodox as the conventional basis of the moral code. This naturalism, which owes much to the Cynics and Sceptics of antiquity, is part of a tradition stretching from Jean de Meun, through Rabelais and Montaigne, to certain English writers of the Renaissance. For example, Samuel Daniel's translation of Tasso's Amintas introduced into English Tasso's conception of a Golden Age when honour had not yet proscribed free love.[44] This particular Golden Age, which Donne also nostalgically alludes to, is cunningly twisted by Lovelace into a libertine argument:

Thrice happy was that golden Age,
When Complement was constru'd Rage,
And fine words in the Center hid,
When cursed No stain'd no Maid's Blisse,
And all discourse was summ'd in Yes,
And Nought forbad, but to forbid.[45]

In the Restoration period, Aphra Behn takes such pleas for permissiveness even further.*

Often, the hero of heroic drama was presented as a natural man who prized his freedom and self-respect above all else. This is particularly true in Dryden's heroic plays, and the resemblance

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*See below, Chapter III, pp. 166-71.

between his heroes and contemporary rakes was pointed out in 1673 by Richard Leigh.[46] Despite Leigh's accusation that Dryden's political ideas were derived from Hobbes, however, it was Otway and Lee who most fully exploited the malevolent libertine "hero". On his first appearance, Don John of Austria, in Otway's Don Carlos, establishes himself as the Restoration equivalent of Edmund in King Lear:

> Why should dull Law rule Nature, who first made
> That Law, by which her self is now betray'd ?
> E're Man's Corruptions made him wretched, he
> Was born most noble that was born most free:
> Each of himself was Lord; and unconfin'd
> Obey'd the dictates of his Godlike mind.
> Law was an Innovation brought in since,
> When Fools began to love Obedience,
> And call'd their slavery Safety and defence. (II i)[47]

At the beginning of Act III he expands these ideas further:

> How vainly would dull Moralists Impose
> Limits on Love, whose Nature brooks no Laws:
> Love is a God, and like a God should be
> Inconstant: with unbounded liberty
> Rove as he list ...
> How wretched then's the man who, though alone,
> He thinks he's blest; yet as Confin'd to one,
> Is but a pris'ner on a Throne. (p. 189)

Man's "God-like" qualities, so the argument goes, are being restrained not only by the laws which "foolish" society imposes, but also by that false reason within himself which Rochester attacks in his Satyr. The "nature" which Edmund and Don John of Austria appeal to is the malignant nature of Hobbes, as opposed to the beneficent nature of Bacon and Hooker.[48] However, it must also be pointed out that a considerable travesty of Hobbes is required in order to arrive at the definition of law which concludes the first of the two passages quoted above.

Donne is another Renaissance writer in whom libertine strains can be found. His naturalism has been shown to be related to that of Montaigne and others.[49] In Confined Love Donne cites the animal world as norm:

> Are birds divorc'd, or are they chidden
> If they leave their mate, or lie abroad a night ?
> Beasts do not joyntures lose
> Though they new lovers choose,
> But we are made worse than those.[50]

This "animalitarianism" or "theriophily",[51] as well as being a form of primitivism, was a favourite stance of the satirist intent on attacking man's pride. But in Confined Love it is no more than one weapon in a simple naturalistic argument. In Elegie XVII, Variety we find a more familiar part of that argument, the Golden Age at a time when false honour was unknown:

> How happy were our Syres in ancient times,
> Who held plurality of loves no crime !
> With them it was accounted charity
> To stirre up race of all indifferently,
> Kindreds were not exempted from the bands:
> Which with the Persian still in usage stands.
> Women were then no sooner asked then won,
> And what they did was honest and well done.
> But since this title honour hath been us'd
> Our weak credulity hath been abus'd;
> The golden laws of nature are repeal'd,
> Which our first Fathers in such reverence held;
> Our liberty's revers'd, our Charter's gone,
> And we're made servants to opinion,
> . . . . . .
> Only some few strong in themselves and free
> Retain the seeds of antient liberty. (pp. 102-3)

The last two lines (which I have emphasised) imply that those who are strong and free are heroes. This is very different from the traditional view of the Golden Age, which for the Stoics had represented the ideal of order and reason. Donne, following Jean de Meun and other "soft"[52] primitivists, makes of it a dream of

unlimited freedom and indulgence. However, he makes subtler use of the libertine persona in Holy Sonnet IX (p. 297) which asks "If lecherous goats, if serpents envious/Cannot be damned; Alas; why should I bee ?" But the speaker checks himself for disputing with God, and prays forgiveness. The poem thus encapsulates the conversion experienced by Donne himself, and by others who followed a libertine course in their youth.

In The Libertine Shadwell presents also, this time for our edification, the "hard"[52] primitivist's idea of the Golden Age, as typified by Juvenal's "Mens sana in corpore sano". The setting is "A delightful Grove", and the dialogue between shepherds and nymphs is in marked, if somewhat laboured contrast to the excesses of Don John and his companions:

FIRST SHEPHERD: Nature is here not yet debauched by Art;
'Tis as it was in Saturn's happy days:
Minds are not here by Luxury invaded;
A homely Plenty, with sharpe Appetite,
Does lightsome health and vigorous strength impart.

FIRST NYMPH: A chaste, cold Spring does here refresh our thirst
Which by no feverish surfeit is increas'd;
Our food is such as Nature meant for Men
Ere with the Vicious, Eating was an Art.

SECOND NYMPH: In noisy Cities riot is pursu'd,
And lewd luxurious living softens men,
Effeminates Fools in Body and in Mind,
Weakens their Appetites, and decays their Nerves.
(IV ii, p.75)

Here Nature is regarded as innate and instinctive, in contrast to Art, which is consciously contrived and self-imposed. These rustics are expounding the Renaissance view that the function of art was to improve on nature,* by cultivation or education. This concept, expressed in genteel "courtesy" literature, carried over into the

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* This idea is parodied in Rochester's Sodom, where complaints about the Dildo-maker's products include the observation that "Art should exceed what Nature gave to man". (V i; 1905 ed., p. 46)

Restoration, where one ideal of society was an easy and "natural" refinement. This, the conventional view of the relationship of art and nature, served to maintain order and harmony. But for the libertine, art was often an instrument of deception, with which to conceal his true nature. Thus one often finds him in comedy masquerading as a courtly lover, or concealing his Machievellian inclinations under the guise of the "honest man". Shadwell's shepherds express an optimistic view of nature, and they refer to the classical conception of the different Ages to explain "luxury", a term which was to become a major subject of debate in the next century. They and their world view are the innocent victims of vicious libertinism. As another of Don John's victims bitterly realises:

> So much has barbarous Art debauched
> Man's innocent Nature. (II i, p. 48)

The nature which these libertines follow is that of Hobbes. Those justifications of libertinism on the grounds of "nature" which are not specifically Hobbist may be divided into two kinds of appeal: those to general nature, and those to particular nature. The former usually appears as "all men are designed by nature to satisfy their sensual appetites, and it is natural and right to do so". In this "prescriptive" appeal to nature, a favourite analogy is with the animal kingdom, and its enemies are custom and dullness. In the comedies, where this soft primitivist ideal of nature forms a large part of the rake's justification, his reform is often accomplished by his being made to see that the truest liberty and happiness lies in a virtuous marriage.

The doctrine of particular nature holds that a man is a victim of his own individual constitution. Libertines are therefore so "by nature", and this is both the basis and the justification for their behaviour. This doctrine may originate in the theory of the four humours, the determinist implications of which alarmed the orthodox.* In The Libertine, as in many other Restoration plays, such appeals to particular nature are expressed in thoroughly determinist terms. Don John and his companions have a conversation with a hermit, who has just rescued them from death:

HERMIT: Oh Monsters of impiety ! are you so lately scap'd the wrath of Heaven, thus to provoke it ?

DON ANTONIO: How ! by following the Dictates of Nature. Who can do otherwise ?

DON LOPEZ: All our actions are necessitated, none can command their own wills.

HERMIT: Oh horrid blasphemy ! ... (III i, p. 55)

In the rather one-sided argument about the freedom of the will which follows this exchange, Don John and his companions maintain that the will cannot be free, because it depends on the understanding, which is not free, since it is subservient to particular nature: "For what we understand, spite of ourselves we do." The hermit ends with a vain appeal to the libertines to exercise their free will:

HERMIT: Lay by your devillish Philosophy, and change the dangerous course of your lewd lives.

DON ANTONIO: Change our natures; go bid a Blackamore be white; we follow our Constitutions, which we did not give ourselves.

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* See below, pp. 121-2.

DON LOPEZ: What we are, we are by Nature; our reason tells us we must follow that.

DON JOHN: Our Constitutions tell us one thing, and yours another; and which must we obey ? If we be bad, 'tis Nature's fault that made us so. (p. 56)

Later, the ghost of the Governor, whom Don John has killed, urges the libertines to reform, but they defy its threat of Hell fire; countering with carpe diem and naturalistic arguments:

DON JOHN: Dreams, Dreams, too slight to lose my pleasure for.
In spite of all you say, I will go on,
Till I have surfeited on all delights.
Youth is a Fruit that can but once be gather'd,
And I'll enjoy it to the full.

DON ANTONIO: Let's push it on: Nature chalks out the way that we should follow.

DON LOPEZ: 'Tis her fault, if we do that we should not.
Let's on, here's a Brimmer to our Leader's health.
(IV iv, p. 82)

An element of élitism creeps in: one ought to "follow nature", but lesser breeds are trapped by their own natures. The prescriptive appeal here merges with the constitutional/deterministic:

DON JOHN: There's nothing happens but by Natural Causes,
Which in unusual things Fools cannot find,
And then they style 'em Miracles. But no Accident
Can alter me from what I am by Nature.
Were there
Legions of Ghosts and Devils in my way,
One moment in my course of pleasure I'd not stay.
(pp. 82-3)

That Don John and his companions have used such determinist arguments to justify every kind of crime is established in this enigmatic conversation in the first scene:

DON LOPEZ: Why does the Fool talk of hanging ? We scorn all laws.

JACOMO: It seems so, or you would not have cut your elder brother's throat, Don Lopez.

DON LOPEZ: Why, you Coxcomb, he kept a good Estate from me, and I could not Whore and Revel sufficiently without it.

DON ANTONIO: Look you, Jacomo, had he not reason ?

JACOMO: Yes, Antonio, so had you to get both your Sisters with Child; 'Twas very civil, I take it.

DON ANTONIO: Yes, you fool, they were lusty young handsome wenches, and pleas'd my appetite. Besides, I sav'd the Honour of the Family by it, for had I not, somebody else would.

JACOMO: O horrid villany !
But you are both Saints to my hopeful Master;
I'll turn him loose to Belzebub himself;
He shall outdo him at his own Weapons.

DON JOHN: I, you Rascal.

JACOMO: Oh no, Sir, you are as innocent. To cause your good old Father to be kill'd was nothing.

DON JOHN: It was something, and a good thing too, Sirra: his whole design was to debar me of my pleasures: he kept his purse from me, and could not be content with that, but still would preach his senseless Morals to me, his old dull foolish stuff against my pleasure. I caus'd him to be sent I know not whither. But he believ'd he was to go to Heaven. I care not where he is, since I am rid of him. (pp. 26-7)

In order to establish his master's character beyond a shadow of doubt at this early stage in the play, Jacomo follows that interchange with a summary of Don John's crimes, concluding: "in short, not one in all the Catalogue of Sins have scap'd you". (p. 28) Don John replies with an expression of his unscrupulous hedonism, which may be indebted to Lee's Nero (1675)*:

> My business is my pleasure; that end will I always compass without scroupling the means; there is no right or wrong but what conduces to or hinders pleasure. (p. 28)

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*See below, p.114.

His pleasure is mostly sexual. Later in the first scene the three villains discuss their activities since they last met:

DON JOHN: I could meet with no willing Dame, but was fain to commit a Rape to pass away the time.

DON ANTONIO: Oh ! A Rape is the Joy of my heart; I love a Rape, upon my Clavis, exceedingly.

DON JOHN: But mine, my Lads, was such a Rape it ought to be Registered; a Noble and Heroic Rape.

DON LOPEZ: Ah ! dear Don John !

DON ANTONIO: How was it ?

DON JOHN: 'Twas in a Church, Boys. (P. 32)

All this is a far cry from the comparatively gentlemanly seduction favoured by Molière's Dom Juan. As Don Antonio explains: "I love resistance, it endears the pleasure." The cynical outcome of his statement on this occasion is remarkable:

DON JOHN: ... If they will not consent freely, you must ravish, friends: that's all I know, you must ravish.

FIRST WOMAN: Unheard-of Villany ! Fly from this Hellish place.

DON ANTONIO: Ladies you shall fly, but we must ravish first.

DON LOPEZ: Yes, I assure you we must ravish -

FOURTH WOMAN: No, Monster, I'll prevent you.

Stabs herself

DON ANTONIO: S'death, she's as good as her word. The first time I e're knew a Woman so.

DON LOPEZ: Pox on't, she has prevented me; she's dead. (II i, p. 45)

On just one occasion, Don John feels a pang of remorse: after poisoning his wife. This may be derived from the similar experience of Dom Juan after his last visit from Dona Elvira, when she urges him to repent; but he is soon his old self again, saying

to Sganarelle: "Upon my word, yes ! We shall have to mend our ways. Another twenty or thirty years of this present life and then we'll look to ourselves." (IV ii, p. 240) Don John's first and last touch of compassion is equally short-lived, and he and his companions single-mindedly pursue their dominant passion* for the rest of the play, with only the occasional variation. For example, Don Antonio suggests a robbery, by way of a change: "We have not robbed a good while; methinks 'tis a new wickedness to me." Don Lopez agrees, but with a flickering realisation of the limitations of hedonism:

> Thou art in the right. I hate to commit the same dull sin over and over again, as if I were marri'd to it: variety makes all things pleasant.

Even sin becomes boring when practised so exclusively, and the plea for variety is itself somewhat half-hearted. However, this conversation occurs while Don John, the Rape-Master General, is off-stage. When he returns their plans alter. In order to make up the numbers after the aforementioned suicide, Don John instructs Jacomo to bring in the first woman he finds in the street, boasting: "if my Man can meet with a Woman I have not lain withall, I'll keep you company; let her be old or young, ugly or handsom, no matter." (II i, p. 46) He is true to his word when an ugly old hag is brought in, and so keen are all three to have their way, that on being told that the officers are outside ready to apprehend them, Don John dismisses Jacomo with: "Away, coward; were the King of Spain's Army beleagu'ring us, it should not divert me from this

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*Cf. Pope's use of the rake Wharton as his exemplum of the "ruling passion" (Epistle I, To Cobham, ll. 174-209).

Exploit." (p. 47) His companions agree enthusiastically. The scenario of the libertine indulging his pleasures in defiance of the forces of vengeance is also encountered in Lee's Nero and Oldham's Sardanapalus.

It is apparent in the first scene that nuns are much sought after as victims by the libertines. Later in the play they set fire to a nunnery in order to gain access to its inmates, and when one of the nuns, believing that she is being rescued, thanks them for their assistance, urging them to go and help quench the fire, Don John replies: "We have another fire to quench; come along with us." (V i, p. 86) Similar in tone is the dialogue which ensues with the hermit, after he has rescued them from the sea, given them a cordial, and offered his hospitality:

DON JOHN: I see thou art very civil; but you must supply us with one necessary more, a very necessary thing, and very refreshing.

HERMIT: What's that, Sir ?

DON JOHN: It is a Whore, a fine young buxom Whore.

{DON ANTONIO: / DON LOPEZ: A Whore, Old Man, a Whore.

HERMIT: Bless me, are you Men or Devils ? (III i, p. 55)

These heroes are nothing if not single-minded. In them Shadwell fuses together his exaggerated conception of libertinism and the Jonsonian humour. Since it is quite appropriate to view the Don Juan syndrome as a type of "humour", this works quite well. The play does not lack humour of the other kind either, though of a much grosser variety than the sardonic wit of Molière's libertin. Molière's play is altogether more refined, more subtle in every way, and it achieves a universality which Shadwell never manages.

Yet, paradoxically, perhaps because of its exaggeration, and despite being very much a product of its time, Shadwell's play might provide more enjoyment for a modern audience.

The accepted view of Shadwell's motive in adapting Rosimond was that he "simultaneously capitalized upon the popular topic of libertinism and the vogue for extravaganzas".[53] His Preface is apologetic. He hopes that readers "will excuse the Irregularities of the Play, when they consider that the Extravagance of the Subject forced me to it: And I had rather try new Ways to please, than to write on in the same Road, as too many do." His conventional claim to a moral purpose rings rather hollow after that:

> I hope that the severest Reader will not be offended at the Representation of those Vices, on which they will see a dreadful Punishment inflicted. And I have been told by a worthy Gentleman, that many years agone (when first a Play was made upon this Story in Italy) he has seen it acted there by the Name of Atheisto Fulminato, in Churches on Sundays, as a Part of Devotion; and some, not of the least Judgement and Piety here, have thought it rather an useful Moral than an Encouragement to Vice. (p. 21)

The three libertines are grotesque caricatures, but their very quality of being larger than life ensures that their deeds are more impressive than their punishment, which, far from being "dreadful", seems rather puny compared to what has gone before. The play therefore seems more likely to provide amusement for the libertines in the audience, or titillation, rather than edification. Lord Chesterfield uses it as an example in his essay "On Affectation" in The World, No. 120 (17 April 1755), to show that some people affect vices. A young man intends to become a rake, so he frequents theatres:

> Where he was often drunk, and always noisy. Being one night at the representation of that most absurd play the Libertine destroyed, he was so charmed with the profligacy of the hero of the piece, that, to the edification of the audience, he swore many oaths that he would be the libertine destroyed. A discreet friend of his, who sat by him, kindly represented to him, that to be the libertine was a laudable design, which he greatly approved of; but that to be the libertine destroyed, seemed to him an unnecessary part of his plan, and rather rash.[54]

Nevertheless, loftier claims than those of Shadwell's Preface have been made for the play. Don R. Kunz argues that Shadwell the moralist considered Restoration tragedy "a perversion of the Classical imperative to instruct",[55] and that just as he had remedied the same deficiency in his adaptations of the Restoration comedy of wit by appending a moral, so in the same way he hoped with this tragedy simultaneously to cash in on the current dramatic fashion and to satisfy his own conscience by seeking to reform the audience. Kunz states this claim to a moral purpose in elevated terms:

> ... in The Libertine Shadwell condemned libertine pretensions against the larger background of conservative Christian morality and orthodox conceptions of social harmony; he exposed and punished the anarchistic libertine course and the popular view of the rake as glamorously heroic. (pp. 169-70)

It could therefore be seen as a development of the process whereby morality is satisfied at the end of his wit comedy, Epsom Wells (1672). There Rains and Bevil, the "men of wit and pleasure", whose antics have amused the audience during the course of the play, are reformed. In my opinion the moral in both plays is "tacked on", rather than intrinsic.

While I do not agree with Kunz about the effect which the ending of The Libertine has on the audience, and although I remain unconvinced by his attribution to Shadwell of such grandiose intentions, his discussion of this play, upon which critical comment is exceedingly rare, is illuminating in other ways. His description of its tone and ancestry is useful:

> This drama mingles the atmosphere of an Elizabethan revenge tragedy, with the farcical actions of a satirical buffoon, the perverted heroics of Spanish hedonists, and a masque of Shepherds and nymphs celebrating the pastoral. The result is a series of violent incongruities evoking a kaleidoscope of audience reactions - fear, pity, horror, and even laughter. (pp. 166-7)

I find it hard to believe that an audience as sophisticated as that of the Restoration could be moved to any other reaction besides hilarity. Consequently, when Kunz goes on to speak of the play's effect, and the motive underlying it, he is very wide of the mark, but again his description is valuable in part:

> And almost paradoxically these jumbled responses work in unison, convincing us of libertinism's absurdity and the folly of the heroic life portrayed in the Restoration stage epics. Certainly The Libertine differs from the usual Drydenesque stage epic: the medium is prose, not heroic couplets; the structure and tone are erratic; and it is an extended satire. The drama is actually a mock epic with such darkly satiric, moralistic overtones that it might pass for tragedy. (p. 167)

"Mock epic" is a useful description of the play, conveying, for example, its episodic nature, but one would have thought that it must almost by definition exclude excesses of darkness and satiric and moralistic overtones, all of which Kunz exaggerates.

Admittedly, as I have already said, Shadwell lacks Molière's lightness of touch. Although Jacomo fulfils Sganarelle's role of satiric buffoon, he provides us with no equivalent of the French servant's denunciation of his master's libertinage. Free thought hardly enters into The Libertine, and the crimes that Jacomo enumerates are of a much earthier variety, including parricide and incest. As with pornography, there is little or no attempt to give credibility to such activities, and the motive for their inclusion seems similarly to be mere sensationalism. Jacomo is more of a voyeur than a satirist, and his repentance and consequent escape from divine retribution is motivated only by fear, the same motive which has kept him in Don John's service. The libertines' defiance is unconvincing in terms of realism, since the vast majority of libertines in real life repented. The retribution itself is equally unconvincing. It is there only because the story demands it, and is by no means as tragically inevitable as Kunz suggests. His explanation of Shadwell's satire errs through over-estimating the audience's susceptibility to theatrical effects:

> Shadwell threw his satiric voice at the libertines from two directions. Their pitiful, groveling servant renders their epic view of man wildly comic, while the other world's powerful, stern spectres render it tragically absurd. The earthly satirist exposes vice and folly; punishing it is the province of the heavenly. (p. 172)

This may sound impressive, in theory, but it surely has nothing to do with how the play affects an audience. It remained popular for sixty years or more because it was "first-rate theatre", not because it offered edification. The fire and brimstone of the ending

was spectacular, but I do not believe that it was frightening, let alone that it came anywhere near achieving Shadwell's professed intention of scaring the libertines in the audience into repenting.

Nevertheless, the predominant view of Shadwell nowadays is that he was a moralist. It is not necessary to accept Kunz's arguments that he was a totally committed satirist, but it is salutary to heed his warning against taking at face value the picture of Shadwell that Dryden's MacFlecknoe leaves us with. If we remain sceptical about Dryden's biased portrait we will give Shadwell more credit than he has usually received from subsequent commentators. On the other hand, we need not accept the more extravagant claims made for The Libertine, either by Shadwell himself, or by the few critics who have considered it worthy of comment.

Altogether, the most balanced remarks on the play have been those of Michael W. Alssid, although he, too, overstates the seriousness of its purpose. He discusses the play in the terms appropriate to an orthodox tragedy, and sees its hero as a tragic hero. Although The Libertine derives much from contemporary comic and heroic-tragic drama, he says:

> ... it is not a study of the comic follies or of the heroic trimmphs of libertinism: it treats of iconoclasm gone mad. It sketches fiercely Hobbes's "nasty, brutish" man who, despite his courage, intelligence, and aristocratic heritage, pits his entire being against all Classical and Christian ideas of law, order and love. Don John's career etches the darkest extreme of libertinism, and that bestiality lurking in the hearts of man bursts forth in him in a terrible passion for disorder.[56]

Though this account, too, is marred by excessive theorising, which is quite at odds with my own experience of the play, Alssid is clearly right to draw attention to Shadwell's use of Hobbes. Another

commentator, comparing Don John's ideas with those of Hobbes, concludes that The Libertine is "a much more extended treatment of the determined will than elsewhere in the drama of the time."[57]

Alssid shows quite well the difference between Don John and his ancestors in comedy. He says of Don John's words - "On, on my Soul, and make no stop in pleasure,/They're dull insipid Fools that live by measure" - from the opening scene:

> These lines clearly echo the comic rakes' attitude toward convention and conventional people who pretend to virtue but who are merely afraid to express their real (their animalistic) emotions, who conceal hatreds and lusts beneath the masks of familial, social, political, and religious forms and attitudes. John carries further the iconoclastic vision and is remorseless as a critic of those forms and attitudes. If we consider his idea of love as mere lust of a temporary nature which seeks endlessly new objects for its pleasures ..., the dark side of John's life, his incapacity to rise above his senses, is seen unquestionably as a heroic deficiency. (p. 109)

This discovery of Don John's role leads to very grandiose claims about the "message" of the tragedy. From the ending's affirmation of divine law and order, the audience is to perceive the function of law which preserves civilisation and maintains man's ideals "despite the disillusionments of human hypocrisy, pretension and folly". (p. 110) The powers that destroy Don John, we are told, "play significant parts in a universe which wants to rise above the libertine vision." To rise above it, man must accept the wisdom of Christ, and it is only the ideals of love, generosity, selflessness and decency - however "artificial" they may seem - which preserve whatever peace the world can offer. (p. 110) But Shadwell was not Milton, after all: surely he was not all that good, even if we may grant that he was better than MacFlecknoe indicates. In trying to redress the balance, it would appear that recent academic studies have carried Shadwell's rehabilitation too far.

5 Lee, Otway and Nero

As examples of the vogue for heroic plays on the theme of malevolent libertinism already alluded to in connection with Shadwell's, those of Lee and Otway are most suitable for examination. Some of Dryden's heroic plays, and also the twin actions of Secret Love, demonstrate that heroic and libertine passion can be complementary, that libertinism need not be destructive. The Indian Emperour, Tyrannick Love and Aureng-Zebe are about much more than love and honour. They explore the paradox of freedom in love, particularly as it affects the sovereign, and hence the political freedom of his subjects. Bredvold goes far towards demonstrating Dryden's consistency on these matters, by reference to his heroic plays as well as the more obviously political poems.[58] While the connection between political and sexual freedom is an extremely interesting one, I must once again declare this topic out of bounds for the present study, since I could not do anything like justice to its repercussions in the space available.

Lee's Tragedy of Nero has been described as an even more complete expression of libertinism than Shadwell's Libertine.[59] As far as its main character is concerned, this is doubtful. Admittedly, Nero is able to wreak more havoc than Don John, by virtue of his more powerful position. He regards himself as a God:

> I ransack Nature; all its treasures view;
> Beings annihilate, and make a new:
> All this can I, your God-like Nero do. (I ii)[60]

The implication is that this character, far from being the victim of a determinist nature, is able to exercise control over external nature, a control which (needless to say) is directed solely towards destructive ends: we never see him "making beings anew" in the play. This theme of "ransacking Nature" for objects of pleasure is firmly established by Nero in his speech closing the first Act:

> On, Nero, on;
> Spend thy vast stock, and riot in thy throne,
> If there be pleasure yet I have not found,
> Name it, some GOD: 'Tis mine, though under ground:
> No nook of Earth shall hide it from my sight,
> But I will conjur't into open light.
> My Scepter, like a charming rod, shall raise
> Such sports, as would old Epicures amaze:
> Pleasures so rich, so various, and so new,
> As never yet the Gods, my great fore-fathers knew.* (I ii, p. 35)

He is presented here as a malignantly omnipotent Epicure Mammon. We have already seen him murder his mother and imprison his tutor, Seneca, for bemoaning his blasphemies. Other murders follow, but there is no further development of Nero's character, nor of his libertinism. Only once is this theme mentioned again: in the last Act, when Petronius, his favourite and pander, brings him the news that the Gauls are invading, and other dire tidings. Nero, like Don John and Oldham's Sardanapalus, resents this intrusion from the outside world, and refuses to allow it to interrupt his pleasures:

> PETR: Time flies; 'tis fit your widdom had design'd -
>
> NERO: Do you consult, while I my pleasures mind. (V ii, p. 64)

The rest is a tedious series of murders, culminating with his undistinguished suicide. Nero is not even enlivened, as Don John is, by a sardonic wit.

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*For an even more single-minded application of this principle, Cf. Bolloxinion, King of Sodom:

> I'll then invade and bugger all the G-ds
> And drain the spring of their immortal c-ds,
> Then make them rub their arses till they cry:
> You've frigg'd us out of immortality. (Sodom, (Paris, 1905), V ii, p. 51)

Fortunately, other elements in this play compensate to some extent for its main character's deficiency. Poppea, a development of the familiar lustful queen of heroic tragedy,* and one of the most explicitly presented female libertines to be found anywhere, is rare in being a character who develops. Petronius, telling his master that he has found him a new victim, describes her simple country charms, temptingly delineating the lascivious elements in her demeanour, which will make her easy prey for Nero:

> Chaste she is thought, because yet never try'd.
> Her quick black eye does wander with desire,
> And, if I judge aright, bears wanton fire. (I ii, p. 34)

She is soon won over, by Petronius's description of the court's attractions, as contrasted with the country, and by Nero's extravagant language. Moral commentary is supplied by Plautus:

> Foul vice Triumphs, trampling on Virtues head.
> Here Fam'd Democritus his teeth might show,
> And Heracletus might his tears bestow. (II iii, p. 40)

Poppea is herself aware of the wrong she is doing, but she is overcome by the stronger feelings aroused in her by Nero, whom she has just seen murder the innocent Cyara:

> I love him; 'tis too plain Just Heaven has sent
> On my inconstancy this punishment.
> I've gone too far to think of a return,
> I must enjoy him: O my heart does burn !
> My blood boils high, and beats with strange desires:
> 'Tis just that madness mingle with such fires. (IV i, p. 54)

That she is not yet quite corrupted to Nero's depths appears two scenes later, when, about to kill Britannicus (one of Nero's enemies and the play's romantic hero), she suffers remorse (or is it really lust ?) and falls into his arms instead. However, by the time her husband and her brother arrive in disguise to tell her that

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* Cuntigratia, Queen of Sodom, is the most extensive parody of this figure. See especially Act IV in Sodom.

her husband and brother are dead, she shows herself in her true colours, expressing desire for the Negro who is really her brother Piso in disguise:

> If, when I dye, I must to torments go,
> 'Tis fit no time be lost; let pleasures flow.
> Fancy its eager appetite shall cloy;
> Let resolution Holy qualms destroy;
> Henceforth, what e're I like, I will enjoy.
> Exit beckoning Piso. (V iii, p. 65)

The incestuous seduction scene which would follow is cut short by the entry of her husband, intent on revenge. He and Piso are almost the only survivors in this play, during the course of which his wife has been corrupted by Nero into a villain almost as spectacular as Nero himself is from the start. It is really the tragedy of Poppea, rather than that of Nero, whose rant is merely monotonous.

Besides being a heroic tyrant like Dryden's Maximin, the debauched Nero and the licence of his court suggest a parallel with the Court of Charles II* - though the King, who saw the play at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, on 16 May 1674,[61] apparently did not mind the implications of this. The identification of Nero with Charles is made quite explicit when, after a first Act full of Nero's crimes, one might imagine the actor playing him turning to face the Royal Box, as he says:

> Let phlegmatick dull KINGS call Crowns their care:
> Mine is my wanton; and does Beauties share
> Above my Mistress' Eyes. On, Nero, on ... (I ii, p. 35)

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*This identification of Charles with Nero had long been a commonplace. To take only one example, it is made in The Fourth Advice (1667), where Charles, instead of fiddling, fornicates, while the Dutch sail unimpeded up the Thames. (POAS 1 (1963))

Taken with the joke about the sceptre later in the same speech, a joke which was a favourite one with the Wits,* the reference must have been unmistakable. But then, Old Rowley was an easy-going character. In any case, there is some ambiguity about the way the Court is treated in the play. Petronius's description of it in seductive terms may even have been regarded as a compliment:

> I think the Court
> May well be tearmed the Noble Rendezvous
> Of Gallant Spirits. (II i, p. 37)

Lee was more closely involved with the circle of the Court Wits than Shadwell, and was also more committed to libertinism.[62] This perhaps explains the ambivalence expressed towards libertinism in the play, and why there is not even a half-hearted attempt to inculcate a moral.

With the obvious exception of Cuntigratia, Queen of Sodom, Poppea's closest rivals to the title of the most thorough-going female libertine are two of Otway's heroines. Deidamia, the lustful Queen of Sparta in Alcibiades (1675), speaks of "sense" as man's "God".[63] But she must take second place on most counts, certainly on the grounds of sheer lust and absolute commitment to pleasure, to the Duchess of Eboli, lover of Don John of Austria in Don Carlos (1676). Her revenge against Don John shows how evil she is:

> H'has reapt his Joys, and now he would be free,
> And to effect it puts on Jealousie.
> But I'm as much a Libertine as He,
> As fierce my will as furious my desires.
> Yet will I hold him; Tho' enjoyment tyres,

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*See below, Chapter IV, p. 195 and Chapter V, p.260.
King Bolloxinion's opening speech in Sodom identifies him even more unmistakably with Charles. But he is said to "permit the Nation to enjoy/That freedom, which a Tyrant would destroy." (p. 10) This must be taken as a compliment, in the Wits' terms.

> Though Love and Appetite be at the best;
> He'll serve as common meats fill up a Feast:
> And look like plenty though we never taste. (IV i)[64]

Don John is much less of a villain than Eboli or the King, who is consumed by jealousy. He turns out at the end to be honest, and is in many ways a sympathetic character, combining elements of Edmund in Lear and Faulconbridge the Bastard in King John. In the end, he renounces libertinism in favour of more glorious pursuits:

> No more in Loves Enervate charms I'le ly,
> Shaking off softness, to the Camp I'le fly;
> Where thirst of Fame the Active Hero warms,
> And what I've lost in Peace, regain in Arms. (V i, p. 248)

Pursuit of martial honour is not incompatible with libertinism, but it distinguishes the active rakes of Restoration drama from the refined Epicurean retirement of gentlemen such as Cowley, who singles out ambition for fame as one of the greatest obstacles to happiness.

6 Sources of the libertine's determinist arguments

Nero, like many other plays of this period, reflects the distorted Hobbism on which the rakes based their pursuit of pleasure. As R.G. Ham, Lee's biographer, has said: "Nero is no mere demigod of ordinary Restoration villainy. He stands before us one-half Elizabethan or Jacobean, one-half what the uneducated rakehells of the pit took to be a Hobbist."[65] Hobbes is the most important single source for the Restoration libertine's ideas, but as with other literary sources, selective reading and some distortion were

entailed in the journey from Hobbes to Hobbism. Hobbes himself was far less of a Hobbist than many to whom that epithet was applied.

As we have seen, scholasticism had been challenged in Europe by writers and events since at least the late sixteenth century. I referred at the beginning of this chapter to a sceptical tradition fathered by Montaigne. Among his many and varied English descendants perhaps the most important was Bacon, who, as an alternative to scholasticism, advocated pursuit of "the pure knowledge of Nature" and experimental science. The climate of the Restoration was receptive to this empirical approach, as the success of the Royal Society shows. In philosophy, Descartes had been stimulated by the challenge which the new Pyrrhonism had presented, and had been able to make a fresh start by banishing preconceived ideas and concentrating on the simple fact of his existence. His idealistic dualism presented an acceptable alternative to the materialism of Democritus, Epicurus, Lucretius and Hobbes for the growing number of minds in Europe who now regarded scholasticism as an obscurantist contradiction of the evidence of the senses, the truth. In England, these included the Cambridge Platonists and the Royal Society. Yet Aristotelianism was still dominant, and its opponents a minority. Popular literature, influenced by this orthodox morality, laid great emphasis on virtue.

Hobbes' Leviathan (1651) begins by challenging Aristotle's explanation of sense, and re-defining sense as "original fancy, caused ... by the pressure, that is, by the motion, of exterall things upon our Eyes, Eares, and other organs."[66] In other words,

it is merely one mass of atoms acting on another. Pleasure is the effect of these on the heart; imagination "nothing but decaying sense". (p. 5) Of particular importance to the libertine was Chapter Six, "Of the Passions", which taught that good and evil were subjective terms:

> But whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth Good: And the object of his Hate, and Aversion, Evill; And of his Contempt, Vile and Inconsiderable. For these words of Good, Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with Relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves. (p. 24)

In Hobbes' universe good and evil are irrelevant as moral concepts, since all actions are necessitated. His system comprises a struggle between a multitude of forces, all of which are determined. One sees this in his discussion of such terms as "Deliberation", "Will", "Liberty" and "Necessity". No libertine put forward such a thoroughly determinist system to justify his behaviour. Typically, the libertine's system was only partially determined. For the rake, only the instincts worked deterministically, as in the traditional account of the passions versus the will. In orthodox thought it was possible to combine determinist and moral features, for example calling misdemeanours sins, but at the same time picturing them as irresistible, thus making them more permissible. A good example of this is the rake Celadon in Dryden's Secret Love,* a less extreme case than Philidor in James Howard's All Mistaken (1672), whose opening speech stamps him as a militant, cynical libertine, akin to the anti-heroes of the tragedies.[67]

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*See below, Chapter III, pp. 151-3.

A more likely source of the libertines' determinist arguments based on their "nature" or "constitution" is the orthodox conception of the passions and their operation - the theory of the four humours, passing later into the idea of the ruling passion. Under this system, a man's passions are governed by purely physical forces, the proportions of various elements in his body and the "humours" to which they give rise. Since he can have relatively little control over these, he can hardly be held responsible for their effects, and although the orthodox version of the system postulates that man's animal urges can be overcome by his reason in conjunction with his will, the fact remains that his reason is often overcome by the passions, and it becomes possible on such occasions to argue that the forces at his disposal are simply too weak to resist the external forces which attacked them. Lord Herbert of Cherbury's mixture of medieval diagnosis and empirical prescription was one which despite his denial that he would defend "any depraved person", appealed to the libertine:

> Now since this physical nature is transported and passes to man, from elements, food or even in physical generation, and emerges as a group of feelings entirely distinct from the behaviour of rational mind, we must see what feelings are most open to blame and what is the most efficacious treatment for them.
>
> In a full-blooded and healthy body there occur lawless desires, licentiousness, lust and scandalous impulses, even priapism; when the body is bilious there occur irritability, recklessness, violence and fits of rage; in a phlegmatic condition there result sloth, dullness of mind, apathy and paralysis; with black-bile there goes peevishness, depression, insanity and delirium. But we must suppose that nature attributes every feeling of this kind to disease rather than to sin, and so there is probably greater need in these conditions for a doctor than for a philosopher or preacher.

> Consequently a lascivious person, when his proper means fail, should be given ... I do not overlook the fact that the mind provides its own remedies, for as I have shown above by bringing an opposing force to bear it can prevail in the full tide of passion and control and still it. Nevertheless, I would say, if the mass of worthy people will allow me, that it is more appropriate to attack physical disease by physical means. Those who insist that fearful distress and physical agonies can be alleviated, not to say banished, merely by the counsels of moral philosophy, display, in my opinion, somewhat meagre intelligence. We must look for the right remedies; we must enquire what temperament actually is, in order to decide the extent to which an excess of humours contribute to a particular delinquency, or may constitute the preponderating factor. For this reason I do not think we should condemn too readily those who are led astray in virtue of some idiosyncrasy. We have no right to accuse of crime a lethargic person because he is indolent, or a person suffering from dropsy because he complains of thirst. In the same way a man goaded by the spurs of Venus or of Mars can be more properly charged with an excess of vicious humours than with wickedness. I have no desire to stand advocate for any depraved person; I merely argue that we should proceed with more gentleness in respect to those persons who fall into sin owing to some physical, animal or almost necessary compulsion.[68]

For the orthodox Christian, of course, God's help is needed to rule the passions. Thus Thomas Halyburton makes the obvious retort to Lord Herbert's determinist approach:

> Well, here is a handsom Excuse for Vice. We must be as far from condemning him, who prompted by Passion, slays and murders, or hurried on by Lust, commits Rapes and Adulteries; as of censuring him, who is sick of a Lethargy, for his Laziness and Indisposition to act; or one that's Hydroptick, for his immoderate Thirst. This Divinity will please profane Men to a Degree. The Salvo he subjoins is very frivolous, and deserves rather Contempt than an Answer.[69]

An explicit connection between libertinism and determinism is made by Richard Burridge, the penitent known in his youth as "the young Rochester", as he priggishly confesses his former heresies:

> Nature, which is but the Instrument of God, I have made my Deity; all the stupendious Operations of Providence I have attributed to Chance; and, with the Stoick, impute the Calamities which attend Mankind, to Fate and Necessity.[70]

Burridge attributes his turning atheist to "the great Delight I took in reading Lucretius and Lucian's Dialogues". (p. 9) Though the reference to the Stoics is an oversimplification, the germs of such a position can be found in their writings, as may be seen in the discussion of the Stoics' attitude towards fate and necessity in Thomas Stanley's History of Philosophy (1659).[71] The Stoics also advocated following nature, and although for them nature inclined to virtue it is possible that the libertine ideal of following nature, as expressed by Théophile and his fellow poets, for example, is primarily a corruption of this and a simplification of it. At any rate, the ideal as it was understood by the Restoration libertine was already well established by the early seventeenth century, and Senault attempts to resist the evil of its temptation by appealing to the purer doctrine of the Stoics themselves:

> I know Philosophers will not agree of this truth, and they never permit us to accuse nature of an error, since they take her for their guide, nor that we dishonour her, all whose motions they esteem so regular. They profess to follow her in all things, and hold that to live happily, a man must live according to nature. The Libertines plead this maxime, and will excuse their disorders, by a doctrine which they understand not: for had they studied in the Stoicks schools; they would find that those Philosophers presuppose that nature was in her first purity, and that they took her not for their guide, but for that they imagined she had preserved her innocency.[72]

As Stanley's account shows, the Stoics, unlike the Sceptics, trusted the evidence of thir senses.[73] However, a much likelier source for the advocacy of sense in opposition to reason (such as one finds in, say, Rochester's Satyr) is Stanley's account of Epicureanism.[74]

The call to "follow nature" has considerably less basis in Hobbes, who is at great pains to depict the State of Nature as rather "red in tooth and claw", so that there would be a greater incentive to form the Commonwealth which Leviathan advocates. Rochester's Satyr reflects precisely this Hobbistic view of the struggle for survival, and the satirist uses Hobbes's emphasis on man's fear to discredit man by comparison with the beasts. It is not until later that fear is actually identified as the cause of his behaviour, so that the early part of this attack assigns to man a kind of "motiveless malignity", which makes the analogy with the beasts even more detrimental to him:

> Which is the basest creature, man or beast ?
> Birds feed on birds, beasts on each other prey,
> But savage man alone does man betray.
> Pressed by necessity, they kill for food;
> Man undoes man to do himself no good.
> With teeth and claws by nature armed, they hunt
> Nature's allowance, to supply their want.
> But man, with smiles, embraces, friendship, praise,
> Inhumanly his fellow's life betrays;
> With voluntary pains works his distress,
> Not through necessity, but wantonness. (ll. 128-38, Vieth, p. 99)

The calculation of this smiling betrayal owes more to Machievellianism than to any determinist system.

Whether or not their antipathy was justified, Hobbes was the moralists' enfant terrible, and attacks on him by the orthodox were legion. Their tone can be gauged from the "answer" to Rochester's Satyr against Mankind, by a Fellow of Wadham College, which contains the line "Say wretched Nero, or thou more wretched Hobbs'", and an extended attack, part of which runs as follows:

Here Hell's great agent Hobb's i'th front appear's,
Trembling beneath a load of guilt, & fears.
The Devils Apostle sent to preach up sin,
And to convert the debaucht world to him.
Whom pride drew in, as Cheat's their bubble catch,
And made him venture to be made a Wratch.
Hobbs, nature's past, unhappy England's shame,
Who damn's his soul, to gett himself a name.
The Resolute Villain from a proud desire,
Of being immortall leap's into the fire.[75]

In A Satyr against Vice, the Whig propagandist and moral reformer John Tutchin bemoans the prevalance of vice and sinners, which:

Would make one think, to re-assume his reign,
The Malmesbury Devil's* come again.
He, the bold Hector of the Gods, could Write,
Rail, and explode the Powers above in spite.
The Atheists Monarch, and the Courtiers tool,
The Scholars Laughing-stock, and Heavens Fool.
Always unwilling, still unfit to die;
The very dregs of damn'd Philosophy...
. . . . . .
And thus our mighty Atheist liv'd, thus fell,
The goodliest Brand that ever burnt in Hell.[76]

In The Play-House, Robert Gould associates him with the rakehells in the audience:

This is the Sum of all the Play-House Jobs,
Begin in Punk and end in Mr. Hobs.[77]

Most ignominious of all, the poetaster Tom Durfey, speaking in the person of the reformed Rochester in A Lash at Atheists (1690), insults Rochester as well as Hobbes when he ignorantly says:

Had Reverend Hobbs this Revelation mark'd
Before his dubious leap into the dark;
Had he found Faith, before false Sence approv'd,
Moses, instead of Aristotle lov'd,
Eternal Vengeance had not found him then,
Nor gorg'd him with his own Leviathan; ...[78]

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* Cf. "the self-conceited Malmesbury Philosopher" (Reflexions on Marriage, and the Poetick Discipline (1673), pp. 6-7). See also Chapter V, , p.302 below. Dryden draws the distinction between the dogmatism of "our poet and philosopher of Malmesbury" and his own "natural diffidence and scepticism" in the Preface to Sylvae (Essays, ed. Watson, II, pp. 25-6).

The Church was also concerned with the popular conception of Hobbes as an "atheist", and approved a number of semi-official refutations. The most elaborate of these was Thomas Tenison's The Creed of Mr. Hobbes Examined, In a feigned Conference Between Him and A Student of Divinity (1670), which was quoted in the commonplace books of several wits. Part of it runs as follows:

> I believe that God is Almighty matter; that in him are three Persons, he having been thrice represented on earth; that it is to be decided by the Civil Power, whether he created all things else; that Angels are not Incorporeal substances, (those words implying a contradiction) but preternatural impression on the brain of man; that the Soul of man is the temperament of his Body; that the Liberty of the Will, in that Soul, is physically necessary; that the prime Law of nature in the soul of man is that of self-Love; that the Law of the Civil Sovereign is the obliging Rule of good and evil, just and unjust ... (p. 8)

Even at the end of the century, he was seen as being responsible for the prevalence of atheism:

> Mr. Hobbes is their Great Master and Lawgiver. I find that they pay a huge reverence to him. If they acknowledge any Divine Thing, it is He. If they own any Scriptures, they are his Writings.[79]

Hobbes, then, was the chief prophet for the libertine's "religion", and he also supplied its main text. Though there is nothing in his writings to justify charges of atheism as we would use the term today, we must remember that at this time it includes those who believe in a first mover, but disbelieve in God's providence, and so it would therefore embrace both Epicurus and Rochester. The deists were sometimes included too, since they denied the basic reason for obeying the moral code, the system of rewards and punishments. This orthodox view implies that once the supernatural incentives to a

virtuous life are removed, a lapse into bestiality becomes inevitable - a thoroughly Hobbesian view of human nature, ironically.

The popular misconception about Hobbes was so widespread that Rochester, in order to give the greatest offence to the godly, makes his main speaker in the Satyr a quasi-Hobbist, who, by echoing the statement about sense in Leviathan, and by adopting Hobbes's ridicule of inspiration and speculation (upheld by the "formal band and beard" in the poem), associates himself with the alleged atheism, materialism, and licentiousness of Hobbes.[80] The same desire to shock the orthodox no doubt prompted Mulgrave's On Mr. Hobbs, and his Writing:

> While in dark Ignorance we lay afraid
> Of Fancies, Ghosts, and every empty Shade;
> Great HOBBS appear'd, and by plain Reason's Light
> Put such fantastick Forms to shameful Flight.
> Fond is their Fear, who think Men needs must be
> To Vice enslav'd, if from vain Terrors free;
> The Wise and Good, Morality will guide;
> And Superstition all the World beside.[81]

Hobbes perhaps needed no such defences from the wits. The influential Cowley had published an ode on him before the Restoration. He was a friend of the King, as well as of Royalists such as Davenant and Waller, and despite Parliamentary investigation into Leviathan, and Aubrey's account of a report that "the bishops would have him burn't for a heretique" because of his poem on "the encroachment of the clergie (both Roman and Reformed) on the civill power"[82] he left London in 1675, and spent his last four years quietly in the country.

The same kind of distortion also occurred with popular thought about Epicurus, whose name, with that of Hobbes, passed into the rhetoric of moralistic attacks on the libertine, as we shall see in the next chapter. Hobbism and Epicurism were seen as the twin props of atheism. Indeed, Hobbes was sometimes viewed as the disciple of Epicurus and his school. Thus Ned Ward, in The Libertine's Choice, has his rake indiscriminately proclaim allegiance to both Hobbes and Lucretius.* They are simply the two leading materialist theories for the mid-seventeenth century which could be used as the bases for a positive system of atheism. In actual fact, Hobbes refutes the Epicurean Summum Bonum (p. 30) and his "golden rule" stifles most opportunities for libertinism, so that drunkenness specifically, and all forms of intemperance are denounced (p. 81). Nevertheless, although Hobbes had a low opinion of sensual pleasures, and though he is said to have disapproved of the licentiousness of Restoration comedy,[83] he is the more permissive of the two, and his thinking requires less distortion to become a vehicle for libertinism than does Epicureanism. But even though their ideas (for example on pleasure) were very different, Epicurus and Hobbes were generally lumped together as well as misunderstood.

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*See below, Chapter V, p. 318.

CHAPTER III EPICUREANISM

1 Epicureanism and Epicurism

Epicureanism is the youngest of the three strands of libertinism, being introduced into English letters with the publication of several serious studies of Epicurus in the mid-1650's. It never made such a great impact as the popular misconception of the Greek philosopher's ideas, which I will term Epicurism.* An Epicure* provides more attractive possibilities, particularly for the satirist, than does the serious Epicurean. Testaments to this in earlier English literature are Chaucer's Franklin, Jonson's Epicure Mammon, and the whole theme of Epicure versus Stoic in Caroline and indeed Restoration drama. Examination of such examples as these shows the Epicure to be a caricature devotee of pleasure, especially over-indulging in the pleasures of eating and drinking. These "vices", and greater sexual freedom, became more acceptable following the anti-Puritan reaction which was embodied in Restoration drama and society, but caricature of them was still employed by satirists to distinguish licence from legitimate freedom. In addition, the "Hobbist" elements of calculation and ruthlessness engendered the iconoclastic hedonists of Shadwell, Lee and Otway.

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* Both terms were occasionally used undisparagingly by the more enlightened writers, notably by Cowley in The Garden, by Katherine Philips, and by Etherege. See below, pp. 144, 163, 237.

The orthodox often sought to discredit all libertines by characterising them as Epicures, or heedless sensualists. Thus the author of Religion the Only Happiness (1694) can say of his youths that:

> Pleasure alone they make their Deity
> Their Rules are Epicures Philosophy,
> And their dear Study is Variety. (p. 9)

The adjective was usually synonymous with "debauched", so that James Porterfield talks of "Epicurish Miscreants, and Swine,/ Revering Laws, nor Human nor Divine",[1] though it took abler critics than him to make effective use of the metaphor of the libertine's religion.

For the Restoration rake, particularly as he is presented in the plays, there is a definite emphasis on the pleasures of the moment, together with the variety necessary to sustain their intensity. Here Epicurus himself has very little to offer. Regarding the former, he makes a distinction in the letter to Menoeceus, and he rejects variety in favour of repose, preferring rest to motion.[2] His weighing of pleasure and pain involves a degree of forethought alien to the carpe diem of the rake. In general, only isolated passages offer the basis for a distortion of the Epicurean notion of pleasure into that of the rake. References to Aristippus and the Cyrenaics in the plays would be much more appropriate, but they are very rare. It is to Epicurus and his school that the rakes refer. Epicurus was usually seen as a brute sensualist, despite Gassendi's emphasis, although he had been distorted in the opposite (that is, puritannical) direction by his followers, a position which St. Evremond refutes in To the Modern Leontium.

Far from being synonymous with the pursuit of pleasure, as popular opinion would have it, true Epicureanism entailed exemplary behavicur, following from strict moderation and self-control. Montaigne and Vanini had been aware of Epicurus, and Nicholas Hill had published a work on him on 1601, but the rehabilitation of Epicurus in scholarly circles begins in earnest with the publication of Gassendi's De vita et moribus Epicuri in 1647. Gassendi had been studying Epicurus since 1626, and his much more exhaustive exposition, the Syntagma philosophicum, was published posthumously in 1658.[3] Walter Charleton's Physiolgia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charletoniana (1654), which drew forth sneers from Butler,* was much indebted to Gassendi's work, as its title acknowledges. Other important early scholarly studies of Epicurus in English were Charleton's Epicurus, his Morals and John Evelyn's Essay on the First Book of T. Lucretius Carus, De Rerum Natura, which both appeared in 1656, though neither of these eminently respectable authors met with much success in restoring the reputation of Epicurus and his school. Besides Gassendi's, other French texts translated into English included Le Grand's The Divine Epicurus (1676), Sarasin's essay on Epicurus, widely attributed to St. Evremond (1689), and Bernier's abridgement of Gassendi's Three Discourses (1699). In addition, there were translations of classical texts, such as Creech's Lucretius (1682), Dryden's Sylvae and the Satyricon of Petronius Arbiter. But scholarly approaches

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*In "A Philosopher", he says: "... now the World is so unconcerned in their Controversies, that three Reformado Sects joined in one ... will not serve to maintain one Pedant." (Characters, ed. Daves, p. 94)

were the exception rather than the rule during the period. Sir Richard Bentley's Boyle Lecture, The Folly of Atheism (1692), is unusual, both for its lack of hysteria compared with other works bearing similar titles, and for its accuracy concerning Epicurus. This is consistent with Bentley's deservedly high reputation, as the first classical scholar to use modern methods.

Bentley's attack on Epicurus was influential in the decline of Epicureanism. Its high point in England was the year 1685,[4] when four works relating to Epicurus appeared: Temple's essay Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; Dryden's translation Sylvae; Ferrand Spence's Various Discourses, a free translation of Sarasin's Discours; and St. Evremond's To the Modern Leontium. Thomas Creech's much admired translation of Lucretius's Six Books of De Natura Rerum had been published anonymously in 1682, and reprinted in 1683 with commendatory verses by Evelyn, Waller, Otway, Aphra Behn and Richard Duke. Dryden was said to be envious of it, but his own translations of Lucretius, and his peculiarly Epicurean renderings of Horace, Ovid and other classical poets in the 1680's and 1690's were themselves very highly regarded and influential. By this time, however, the emphasis was beginning to change. The rise of the middle classes after 1688, with the formation of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, and the allied controversy over the licentiousness of the stage, which came to a head with Collier's Short View in 1698, all accelarated the eclipse of Epicureanism. The last year which saw important contributions in the field was 1712, with John Digby's translation of Epicurus's

Morals, and Sir Richard Blackmore's Creation, the most complete (and the most unreadable) anti-Epicurean document of the eighteenth century. But Swift made an Epicurean the epitome of modern presumption in A Tale of a Tub, and Epicureanism continued to be parodied in the real-life excesses of the Medmenham Monks. It also provided the necessary setting for pornography in Edward Sellon's The New Epicurean (1740),

2 St. Evremond

More important from the point of view of Epicurus in England than the works of scholarship or pseudo-scholarship was the treatment he received from writers such as Cowley and St. Evremond. The latter, more than any other single figure, introduced into England the spirit of the libertins, at the very time when English society was more receptive to their ideas than it had ever been before. As an exile in London, St. Evremond became acquainted with most of the Restoration celebrities. As a young man he had frequented the salons of the Louis XIII epoch, notably those of Mesdames Sablé and Foucquet, where libertin genres predominated. In exile, he missed particularly the salon of his great friend Ninon de Lanclos, to whom he was later to write To the Modern Leontium, a letter which epitomises Restoration Epicureanism. However, in the last twenty years of the century he was a constant attendant at the French salon established in London by Hortense, Duchess of Mazarin,* herself a French expatriate. Dorset, Waller

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* Mazarin, as one of the King's mistresses, felt the lash of the lampooners. In Rochester's Farewell, for example, her sexual activities are recounted (ll. 119-63), together with those of other leading ladies. St. Evremond's liaison with her was entirely innocent in this respect.

and Mulgrave were also frequent visitors at her fashionable discussions.[5]

St Evremond's brand of Epicureanism bears the stamp of his own personality. It is not so refined as that of his predecessor Cowley, nor of his successor Temple, yet nor is it so overtly hedonistic as Rochester's. It is essentially a philosophy of moderation. St. Evremond's life and writings examplify the ideal of the honnête homme, the perfectly civilised man. In this capacity he attacks those who present an extreme position, whether it be committed depravity or inflexible virtue. His own attitude is realistic, devoid of cynicism or illusions, and his weapon is irony, learned from La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld. The assessment of his "Character" which he sent to the Comte de Gramont stresses the moderation of his thought and of his life: "... a Philosopher equally remote from Superstition and Impiety: a Voluptuary, who has no less aversion from Debauchery, than inclination for Pleasure."[6]

Pleasure is a central preoccupation of St. Evremond, and in his letters he returns to it again and again. In 1656, for example, he writes to the Comte d'Olonne: "... the principal end for which Wisdom was given us, was to direct us in the enjoyment of Pleasures." (p. 14) Later in the same letter he makes his position clearer: although "We can never bestow too much address on the Management of our Pleasures", (p. 16) there is "a certain medium to be observ'd ... We must enjoy the present Pleasures, without impairing the future." (p. 17) He then enumerates the kinds and degrees of pleasure, in a passage which reads like a refined prefiguring of Bentham's "hedonic calculus".

Although in his earliest extant letter, dating from about 1647, St. Evremond states baldly that "Epicurus is unacquainted with any thing but the Body" (p. 2), by 1656 he had a more thorough knowledge of that philosopher, for he speaks of "the spiritual pleasure of good Epicurus"; but he goes on to say, somewhat disparagingly, that "agreeable Indolence" is "the utmost of what the Philosophy of Epicurus and Aristippus can afford to their followers", adding that true Christians will taste a greater felicity. (pp. 19-20). Much later in life he admits: "I ever admir'd Epicurus's Morals" (p. 198), and his other references are favourable as well as knowledgeable. His admiration extended also to Gassendi, whom he described as "the most knowing and the least presuming of all Philosophers". (p. 34) Dryden approved of St. Evremond's opinion of Epicurus, for he says in his Character of M. St. Evremond (1692): "I would say that our author has determined very nicely in his opinion of Epicurus, and that what he has said of his morals, is according to nature, and reason."[7] This is surely proof enough of St. Evremond's success in making that Greek school respectable in England, as Gassendi had done in France.

In a letter to Mme. de Kérouallе in 1671, where his object is to try and dissuade his friend from becoming a nun, St. Evremond expresses the central problem facing the libertine in his pursuit of pleasure:

> I know not which of the two is more injurious to the happiness of the Fair-Sex: "Either to abandon themselves wholly to their Inclinations, or strictly to follow the dictates of Virtue; and whether the indulging their Passions be attended with more Misfortunes, than they are depriv'd of Pleasures by the constraint they lay on themselves." (p. 146)

It makes no difference that he defines the problem in terms of the ladies. He similarly advised the Comte d'Olonne that since there was an obligation to live as agreeably as possible, he should omit "all study of Wisdom, which will contribute neither to the lessening of your Troubles, nor to the regaining of your Pleasures". (p. 151) On rare occasions, St. Evremond seems to be nearing a more extreme position:

> Private men are but too much fetter'd by the Laws of Civil Society; so that one of the greatest pleasures they can enjoy, is sometimes to follow the dictates of Nature, and to indulge their own Inclinations. (p. 196)

But even here his position is essentially one of moderation, for like Dryden he is arguing that it is a very different matter when the King acts in this way.

Any morality of pleasure and personal happiness is inevitably egoistic. Morality for St. Evremond became the art of enjoyment, the organisation of pleasures. He was more far-sighted than mindless hedonists in that he recognised the impairment of future pleasures as a criterion for the present. With similar foresight, he recognised that pleasures must be abandoned when they became passions, because then one would be a slave to them, and it is no pleasure to be addicted to something. In other words, reason must guide the passions towards a course of moderation. Misuse of reason* could either result in extreme austerity, or it might pose unanswerable questions. The latter could be avoided by forbidding

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*Rochester's Satyr makes more explicit the distinction between speculative or false reason, and empirical "right" reason. See below, Chapter IV, p. 203.

abstract speculation, remaining strictly empirical and judging by direct observation, as St. Evremond did. As for austerity, it was the supreme achievement of religion that it could transform abstinence and suffering into pleasure. St. Evremond's position of moderation in the Ancients versus Moderns controversy is typical. He condemns austerity on the one hand, yet he describes as "madness" "le faux esprit que prend un libertin".[8] The libertins' solution was too simplistic for his subtle mind.

As the perfect example of an honnête homme, cultured and not pedantic, St. Evremond agrees with La Rochefoucauld that the honest man should allow wisdom rather than virtue to guide him in the path between vice and austerity. It is the mark of civilised society that it is based on pleasure, whereas primitive society is based on virtue. Social pleasure, particularly, is the end of civilised man in society. Pleasures are to be ruled by wisdom and delicatesse, social relations by honnêteté. St. Evremond follows Epicurus and Montaigne in making friendship the cardinal virtue.[9] It is ruled partly by wisdom, partly by honnêteté. Plaisirs delicats are thus inseparable from moeurs polis, so that what he is saying approximates to Pope's maxim that "self-love and social are the same", an eminently respectable view.

In his key essay Sur les Plaisirs (1656), St. Evremond condemns the sensual who abandon themselves to gross appetites, and praises the delicats whose desires are governed by right reason. Elsewhere

he urges the virtuous to be more moderate, especially towards the vicious. For him, there is no war between reason and the passions. Neither is there any question of locking himself away against temptation. Indeed, much of the pleasure he speaks of comes from external sources. As he makes clear in De la retraite, he fears solitude and retreat. For him, commerce with other honnêtes gens is necessary, and the seclusion of the garden holds no attraction in itself. There is a distinction between seeking refinement in pleasures and "pure" Epicureanism. In Sur la morale d'Epicure he differentiates between two sorts of Epicureans: "les uns philosophant à l'ombre et cachant leur vie selon le précepte; les autres qui ... se laissaient aller à des opinions plus naturelles".[10] Honnêtes gens fall into the latter category.

St. Evremond considered that the pleasures which he enjoyed, though necessary for a civilised life, should not become ends in themselves. Whether the pleasures be friendship, love, conversation or reading, one should never consecrate onseself to them entirely, but should keep enough liberty to change them. Once reason has chosen, the heart follows this choice, but if the pleasure palls, reason should free one from it and find another to replace it. One should avoid both entire subjection and complete freedom, aiming at "une liaison douce et honnête, aussi agréable à nos amis qu'à nous-mêmes."[11]

Ironically (or perhaps inevitably), St. Evremond's own early enjoyment of life and its pleasures gradually receded, until only food was attractive to him, and finally his interest in life itself

weakened. He remained as unperturbed by the thought of death as he had been when he wrote Sur les Plaisirs. Testaments to his courage in the face of approaching death include Bayle's.* He died joking and refusing a priest, though he never said that he was an unbeliever, only that he did not need the worldly ceremonies which accompanied belief. He is one of the few libertines to die unconverted, remaining characteristically independent of any form of religion, as of all literary or philosophical schools.

Neither did St. Evremond's totally unprejudiced mind deny the existence of life after death. Like Montaigne, he accepted death as part of the universal law. He remained consistent in the view that it was better to accept good and bad in the present, rather than chase after some ideal future happiness which might turn out to be illusory. The pleasures which he cultivated were necessary divertissements, with the essentially negative value of distractions from the unpleasant, such as the thought of death or the contemplation of life. But they were a way of escaping misery rather than a sign of it.

Nevertheless, St. Evremond was unable to stop thinking of the human condition, despite his policy of divertissements. He wanted not to believe, but doubted the worth of his own scepticism. Thus neither deism nor atheistic humanism afforded him any relief. Nor was he able, like Pascal, to reject humanism and the worldly life and make an ideal of Christian asceticism. St. Evremond shared the

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*Their admiration was mutual. Des Maizeaux describes St. Evremond's enjoyment of Bayle's Dictionary in his Life (Works (1728), I, p. cxxxvii). Bayle in turn was grateful for St. Evremond's defence (letter 329 to M. Marais, 28 Dec. 1705; Cf. nos. 347 and 298).

same uneasinesses as Pascal, but remained unable to solve them, either by more or less pagan libertin wisdom, or by accepting the necessity of the ascetic Christian life. Because of this, St. Evremond is the perfect homme moyen, independent and without prejudice, cynicism or hypocrisy. His view of man accords with Pascal's: man is great and miserable at the same time, essentially the same in all ages, and the fact that he does not know himself is a fundamental part of his character. Underneath the smiling surface of St. Evremond's writing there lies a deeply pessimistic uneasiness.[12] This duality is neatly captured in the "Epitaphe de Mr. de S. Evremont", which describes him by means of a series of paradoxical contrasts, such as "an Angel and a Devil" and "An Epicure in his life, and a Sceptick in his Death".[13]

Before going on to consider the influence of St. Evremond's interpretation of Epicurus on Sir William Temple, it is first necessary to observe how Epicurean ideas developed in English poetry, achieving prominence after 1660.

3 Cowley

There are two main sources for the Epicureanism expressed in Cowley's Essays. Firstly, his stay in Europe, especially Paris, as Secretary to the exiled English court from 1644-56, brought him into contact with the sceptical libertinism prominent in French literary society during those years. In particular, Gassendi, who is quoted in the Essays, lectured at Paris from 1645 onwards, and his De Vita, ... Epicuri (1647), the notes on Diogenes Laertius, and later

the Syntagma, gave immense impetus to interest in Epicurus. But although Cowley was exposed to the characteristically libertin Epicureanism of the French descendants of Montaigne and Rabelais, he was also the heir to a native tradition with strong Stoic and Epicurean elements. The sources in Horace, Virgil and other classical poets which he quotes in the Essays to support his arguments had been used by earlier English poets, but it was Cowley's adaptation of them, combined with the changed intellectual climate after the Restoration, which gave such a fillip to refined Epicureanism in the 1660's. The Christian Epicureans and men of science who directly influenced him, such as Charleton, reinforced Cowley's own conviction that the Epicurean philosopher, the Christian natural philosopher and the Christian philosopher-poet had the same goals.[14] He combined their attitudes into a programme for the best human life, pleasurable and according to God's intentions for man's happiness, and this ideal is exemplified in The Garden.

Abraham Cowley features prominently in Maren-Sofie Røstvig's The Happy Man, an exhaustive study of the metamorphosis of the classical beatus ille theme in seventeenth century English poetry. Cowley's Essays contribute eighteen classical sources for the tradition of the Happy Man, the nature of which can be deduced from the two most important examples, Horace's second Epode and Virgil's praise of the farmer in Georgics II. The introductory words of both passages were echoed by English poets in every possible variation. Although these translations and imitations all condemn the false pleasures of the world, and associate them with life in town and at court, and with mental blindness and instability, the formula for

happiness varies. Miss Rostvig discerns five basic motifs, occurring either separately or in conjunction with one or more of the others.[15] These may be summarised in tabular form:

Number and common factor	Motif	Character	Type of Happy Man
1 Contentment	Happiness is a question of internal peace. The Happy Man has nothing, yet he has everything because he is completely self-possessed and serene (sibi imperiosus).	Stoic. Poetry austere in mood.	Stoic Wise Man.
2 Contentment	Internal and external peace can best be achieved in the obscure life of the husbandman (parva rura) on a Sabine farm.	As no. 1	Happy Husbandman.
3 Intellectual knowledge	A supreme type of mental serenity is achieved by the man who obtains a knowledge of the universe, by studying the "causes of things" (expansion of no. 1).	Poetry intellectual in its austerity.	Lucretian philosopher-poet.
4 Purer and truer pleasures.	A country life offers truer and more genuine pleasures than courts or cities. Rural scenes are more genuinely beautiful.	Epicurean ideas, but not necessarily exclusively. Refined.	Gentleman-farmer or gentleman-philosopher, who delights in the society of a few well-chosen friends.
5 As no. 4	A Golden Age or Earthly Paradise can be found among scenes of happy rural innocence.	As no. 4, but more sensuous.	Prelapsarian Adam, or voluptuous innocent.

Though numbers 1 and 5 appear to be mutually exclusive, when the Golden Age turns into a spiritual garden, inside which a union with God may be achieved, its sensuousness can be reconciled with a complete austerity towards mere earthly objects or passions.

The rendering of this classical tradition was coloured by the mood of each succeeding generation. Herrick, for instance, celebrated the pure joys of country life in true lyric poetry, and stopped writing poetry when the Civil War broke out. The last of the Elizabethans, he was not moved, like other poets at this time, to write in praise of retirement. In this he was exceptional. Milton and Habington, perhaps influenced by the Horatian odes of Casimire Sarbiewski, showed the way by adding the ingredient of solitude to the picture of the happy man as a neo-Stoic Serene Contemplator, the poetic counterpart to the prose Characters of Joseph Hall and Wye Saltonstall. The increasing popularity and quality of expression of the beatus ille motif in these poets, and in Denham, Vaughan and Marvell, can largely be explained by the austerity of the happy country life depicted by Horace and Virgil being strongly in accordance with the religious temper of the mid-century. The ordered Elizabethan world view had by then completely collapsed.[16]

By the 1640's the civil disturbances had forced a large part of the population to retire out of necessity, and, in particular, defeated Royalists in the Interregnum. At the same time, Neo-platonic and mystic thought were increasing in popularity, as we have seen. These conditions transformed the neo-Stoic Serene

Contemplator into what Miss Rostvig calls an "ecstatic Hortulan Saint",[17] the Royalist counterpart to the Puritan pilgrim. Neo-platonic poets such as Henry More, Mildmay Fane, Edward Benlowes, Vaughan and Traherne added two further themes to the classical beatus ille motifs: the Biblical notion of the Earthly Paradise (or sometimes the classical Golden Age); and the partly Hermetic, partly Neoplatonic theme of nature as a divine hieroglyph, the proper study of which enables a secret, spiritual connection with God.* Marvell's Garden is the supreme embodiment of these themes in lyric form;[18] while Milton, although he was writing in an age when it was no longer fashionable, may be said to have given the ultimate expression to the motif of the Earthly Paradise.+

Cowley's The Garden expresses to some degree the ecstatic mood of the Hortulan Saint's belief in the presence of God in the Creation, but the belief is stated conditionally. While the garden is represented as an Earthly Paradise in the manner of Marvell's, Cowley adds a tentative approval, in his sixth stanza, of the most famous ancient garden philosopher:

> When Epicurus to the World had taught,
> That pleasure was the chiefest good,
> (And was perhaps i' th' right, if rightly understood)
> His life he to his Doctrine brought,
> And in a Gardens shade that Sovereign Pleasure sought.
> Whoever a true Epicure would be,
> May there find cheap and virtuous Luxurie.[19]

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*The latter can be seen as related both to the mystical pantheism of sects such as the Ranters, and to the naturalistic pantheism of the French group of libertin poets.

+Certainly it had a strong influence on the loco-descriptive poetry of the eighteenth century, although by then deism and other developments had led to a different conception of the significance attached to nature. Cf. Chapter V, p.326 below.

After this the Hortulan Saint disappeared, as a result of the more sceptical climate of the Restoration. The vogue for the Epicurean prescription for happiness as a state of pure tranquillity and ease caused the Horatian Happy Husbandman to turn into the Innocent Epicurean or the Lucretian Detached Spectator. Cowley is the poet in whom this transition is most apparent.

In praising Chesterfield for preferring a retired life, Dryden refers to both the Innocent Epicurean and the Detached Spectator. Having first dismissed those whose greed tempts them "to make their solitude luxurious - a wretched philosophy, which Epicurus never taught them in his garden", he introduces the Lucretian spectator, viewing sea storms from a safe vantage:

> You, my Lord, enjoy your quiet in a Garden, where you have not only the leisure of thinking, but the pleasure to think of nothing which can discompose your Mind. A good Conscience is a Port which is Land-lock'd on every side; and where no Winds can possibly invade, no Tempests can arise. There a Man may stand upon the Shore, and not only see his own Image, but that of his Maker, clearly reflected from the undisturb'd and silent waters.[20]

Dryden's characterisation of Mulgrave as an innocent Epicurean in his dedicatory Preface to Aureng-Zebe probably gave Rochester the hint for his parody of Mulgrave's supposed greatness in A Very Heroical Epistle.* The satirical exaggeration of the Epicurean position in Dryden's praise of Mulgrave also looks forward to Swift's self-sufficient spider in The Battle of the Books: "True greatness, if it be any where on earth, is in a private virtue, removed from the notion of pomp and vanity, confined to a contemplation of itself, and centering on itself."[21]

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*See below, Chapter IV, pp.214-6. Dryden says in his dedication that Cowley is a better master than Epicurus.

As Thomas Stanley explains, there is no place for licentiousness in Epicureanism, for it emphasises the pleasures of rest rather than those of motion:

> For it is not perpetual Feasting, and Drinking; not the Conversation of beautiful Women; not Rarities of Fish, nor any other Dainties of a profuse Table, that make a happy Life; but Reason, with Sobriety, and a serene Mind ... Happy indeed, who knowes The chief good and a blessed Life, consists not in Soveraignty or Power, not in numerous Wealth and Plenty, but in Indolence, Composure of Affections, and such a Disposition of Mind, as, circumscribing all things by the Boundaries of Nature, makes him, in being content with Little, obtain that which they, who rule over many, and possesse great Treasures, despair ever to arrive at.[24]

It is easy to see how Swift parodied this in his definition of Epicureanism as "the serene peaceful state of being a fool among knaves", which concludes his delineation of the happy, foolish Epicure in A Tale of a Tub.

It follows from Stanley's definition that the Epicurean sought to avoid public employment. Sir George Mackenzie argues in A Moral Essay, Preferring Solitude to Publick Employment (1666) that: "solitude, Contemplation, or a Country-life, have more of pleasure in them than publick Employment."[23] In defending retirement, he paraphrases Lucretius on the detached spectator:

> The world is a Comedy ... I know no securer box, from which to behold it, then a safe Solitude, and it is easier to feel then to express the pleasure which may be taken in standing aloof, and in contemplating the reelings of the multitude, the excentrick motions of great men, and how fate recreats [sic] itself in their ruine ...[24]

Miss Rastvig points out that the attraction of such a refuge, not only from sectarian enthusiasm, but also from the excesses of "the

great", must have been obvious to men like Sir William Temple, and she adduces this as one of the chief reasons why the philosophy of Epicurus became so popular in England at this time (p. 233). Certainly, Cowley's passionate espousal of rural retirement can best be explained as a reaction against the world he saw around him. However, even in the country he was pestered by requests for favours: Sprat, Buckingham's Chaplain, describes, in his introduction to Cowley's imitation of Horace's Country Mouse how he and Cowley were liable to have a document thrust in front of them, with the words "get his Graces hand to this".[25]

From his service at the Court of the exiled Stuarts, Cowley was well placed to observe the great. He turned for support to the classical Stoic paradox that the great man, in having all, has nothing, whereas the happy man, in having nothing, has all. Like Horace, Virgil and Martial, Cowley denounces the corruptions of life at the court of the great man. However, his free translations add a passionate intensity, one might almost say enthusiasm, which is alien to the dispassionate Stoic statement. Cowley's are among the first translations to attempt to render the spirit of the classical poets, rather than their literal meaning. This is not distortion, merely elaboration of elements seen to exist in Horace and Virgil. The early part of the century had stressed their Stoic aspects, since these suited the spirit of the age. For the same reason the Restoration translators stressed the carpe diem and Epicurean elements in the ancient poets. Dryden, discussing imitation in Denham's and Cowley's sense, in his Preface to Ovid's Epistles, Translated by Several Hands (1680), announces his

intention to carry further than they did "this libertine way of rendring Authours (as Mr. Cowley calls it)".[26] His translation of Horace embodies his conviction, expressed in the Preface to Sylvae (1685), that: "let his Dutch Commentatours say what they will, his Philosophy was Epicurean". (p. 399)

Cowley's renderings mark this important transitional stage in the development of the imitation in English. His treatment of the passage on the philosopher-poet and the husbandman in Virgil's second Georgic shows Epicurean elements softening the hard Stoic line. The first of four passages translated from the Latin which conclude his essay Of Agriculture, it argues that the gentleman-philosopher, retired to his country estate, is happier than the humbler husbandman-farmer, because more conscious of his happiness. Such an awareness, achieved by reason or contemplation rather than by the direct inspiration which enthusiasts experienced, was possible only for the educated man. This view of the happy man as a gentleman-gardener was to become the generally accepted one in the eighteenth century.[27] The impetus for this development was provided by Cowley's interpretation of the beatus ille motif, which reached a wider audience in the Restoration through such popular poets as Katherine Philips and the Earl of Roscommon.

Cowley's Pindaric odes were much imitated after 1660, at a time when metaphysical poetry had fallen into universal disrepute. They are to be found embedded in the Essays and Discourses (1668), whose typical pattern comprises an essay, several loose classical translations, and finally an original ode. Their overall theme is

the question of human happiness, which is often stated in intensely personal terms, as titles like Of Solitude, Of Obscurity, The Dangers of an Honest Man and Of Myself might lead one to suspect. Since Miss Røstvig has discussed them fairly comprehensively, I will do no more than briefly draw attention to one or two passages which demonstrate Cowley's brand of refined Epicureanism.

The first essay, Of Liberty, states the basic assumption that happiness depends on intellectual and emotional liberty, so that a person, like a nation, should be governed by laws of his own making. However, most men, and particularly rulers, are not free, because they are slaves to the passions of ambition, covetousness or voluptuousness. The voluptuous man is a slave to his pleasures, and can only be truly free if he rationally guides his passions. When Epicurus's friend Metrodorus said that he had learned to give his belly just thanks for all his pleasures, he meant that it moderated his appetites, giving liberty and happiness. The remark was therefore not, as the calumniators of Epicurus' school say, one of their most scandalous sayings.[28] The guarantor of liberty is moderation. Cowley quotes Martial's Epigrams in support of this view, and urges it in more impassioned tones in the Pindaric ode which concludes this essay (pp. 386-91).

The lustful or luxurious man must free himself from his slavery and learn to be content with little. This familiar Stoic and Christian belief is stated in Cowley's Essays in themes which were

to achieve prominence in the debate over luxury during the next century. One such motif is the country versus the city. In Of Agriculture, having commended the country life, he represents its pleasure in terms of a beautiful and modest wife, the city equivalent being an impudent and fickle harlot. The husbandman knows the joys of nurture and the satisfaction of cultivation, whereas the city dweller is merely a guilty consumer: "Here is harmless and cheap Plenty, there guilty and expenseful Luxury." (p. 403) The contrast between the "Vices and Vanities of the Grand World" and the "innocent happiness of a retired life" is further elaborated in Of Greatness. This approval of adequate simplicity, with the consequent deprecation of luxury, is the main message of Cowley's Essays, which adumbrate later uses of classical sources on that question.

Like St. Evremond, Rochester and others, Cowley follows Epicurus in placing a high value on friendship. In Of Obscurity he presents a picture of Epicurus and Metrodorus hidden in their Garden. He argues here that friendship is essential, and he rejects fame, preferring the simple pleasures of the conversation of one or two friends, health and quiet. But ironically, and like St. Evremond, he did not enjoy such happiness in his own retirement: Sprat and Johnson both moralise on the vicissitudes he suffered in the country on account of sickness and misfortune.[29] Nevertheless, Cowley remained consistent with his renunciation of public life and his views on the corruption of the Court, and stayed in retirement in the country until his death in 1667. Yet even to a healthy man, the rural scene was not always as attractive once one was actually

there as it had appeared when cooped up in the city, observing the antics of "the great". Robert Gould, for example, bitterly describes this discrepancy between what he used to celebrate and the dreadful reality of his experience of country life, in To the Reverend Mr. Francis Henry Cary ... Upon my fixing in the Country (1689).[30] The romantic fantasy world of pastoral was a form of nostalgia indulged in almost exclusively by the city dweller.

Such disillusion with the country as Gould expresses is, however, extremely rare amongst Epicureans, presumably because they generally had the means to make their retirement pleasant, whether a hard or a softer primitivist paradise was aimed for. On the other hand, the rakes of the comedies, like the Court Wits in their heyday, tended to regard the country as uncivilised and crude, "a place of hideous banishment"[31],* and its inhabitants as "A stupid, Obstinate, Illiterate Race", as Gould called them in A Satyr upon Man.[32]

As early as 1667, Dryden incorporated Cowley's view of retirement into a debate in Secret Love between two romantic lovers, whose love is thwarted by their responsibilities at Court. The Princess and her lover wish that they were shepherds, who would be free to love, uncomplicated by the restrictions imposed on royalty. Philocles infers that "Since happiness may out of Courts be found", they should seek content in a cell, if they can find one. Candiope

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* Cf. below, Chapter IV, p.180. The two contrasting views of the country are interestingly dealt with by Raymond Williams in The Country and the City (1973), Chapter 5.

is worried that he is fleeing the Court for the wrong reasons, and that exile from it will prove too hard a sacrifice:

> Those who, like you, have once in Courts been great,
> May think they wish, but wish not to retreat:
> They seldom go but when they cannot stay;
> As loosing Gamesters throw the Dice away.
> Ev'n in that Cell, where you repose would find,
> Visions of Court will haunt your restless mind;
> And glorious dreams stand ready to restore
> The pleasing shapes of all you had before. (III i)[33]

In reply, Philocles pays her a compliment:

> He, who with your possession once is blest,
> On easie terms may part with all the rest.
> All my Ambition will in you be crown'd,
> And those white Arms shall all my wishes bound.

Ambition was one of the vices Cowley had identified as the scourge of the great, and it is appropriate that Philocles should remind his love that he is renouncing all the power which he would inherit at Court, in order to enjoy her physical charms unhampered by the cares which would accompany his inheritance. His picture of their imagined joy is as alluring as the soft primitive ingredients can make it:

> Our life shall be put one long Nuptial day,
> And, like chaf't Odours, melt in Sweets away.
> Soft as the Night our Minutes shall be worn,
> And chearful as the Birds that wake the Morn.

Candiope, who has some of the scepticism of Shakespeare's Rosalind, retorts:

> Thus hope misleads it self in pleasant way;
> And takes more joyes on trust then Love can pay !

But after a little more probing to ascertain the strength of his love, she agrees to go with Philocles.

This romantic love affair is paralleled in the process by which the extravagant rake Celadon and his equally libertine mistress achieve a compromise whereby their "marriage" allows each to remain free to pursue other loves. (V i, pp. 97-8). For these more militant libertines, the country offered less opportunity. Dorset's rejection of the vices which Cowley had denounced is in this Song ostensibly for purely libertine ends, yet the ambiguity of its conclusion is typical of the more accomplished Wits:

May the ambitious ever find
  Success in crowds and noise,
While gentle love does fill the mind
  With silent real joys.

May knaves and fools grow rich and great,
  And the world think 'em wise,
While I lie dying at her feet,
  And all the world despise.[34]

One would like to think that the friendship between Cowley and John Evelyn was based on Epicurean ideals. The translator of the First Book of Lucretius's De Natura Rerum (1656), Evelyn had, on 28 January 1658, expressed the wish, in a letter to Sir Thomas Browne, that the defeated Royalists would encourage gardening, "the hortulane pleasure, these innocent, pure, and usefull diversions... whilst brutish and ambitious persons seeke themselves in the ruines of our miserable yet dearest country."[35] In this contrast between the rebellious faction, characterised by pride, ambition and passion, and the Royalists, in stately retirement, Evelyn gives direct political application to the Horatian belief in the ability of a quiet country life to subdue the passions and ensure a proper mental serenity. He makes it a Royalist rallying call, an antidote to dangerous enthusiasm, represented as madness by

Royalist satirists such as Butler, and later the Augustans, whose urbanity it offended. Evelyn suggested that the embattled Royalists form a society of the paradisi cultores, persons of antient simplicity, Paradisean and Hortulan saints, to be a society of learned and ingenuous men, such as Dr. Browne." Maren-Sofie Røstvig has shown that these "Paradisean and Hortulan saints" already existed: they were the poets Fane, Vaughan, More, Marvell and Traherne.[36] In Cowley's poetry the Hortulan Saint is in a state of transition into the innocent Epicurean. It could also be argued that in 1660 the "society of learned and ingenuous men" became the Royal Society, of which Epicureans such as Evelyn, Cowley and Charleton were prominent members. The sceptical libertin worldliness of Temple is absent from their thought.

In 1666 Evelyn dedicated the second edition of his Kalendarium Hortense, or The Gardener's Almanac (1664) to Cowley, who in turn addressed The Garden to Evelyn, the man whose happiness had followed from his wisdom in choosing books and gardens rather than the "empty shows and senceless noys" of "the frantick World". (p. 422) Most of the themes so far discussed in relation to the Essays find expression in this poem. The Earthly Paradise, where the marks of the Creator are yet visible, is transformed into the Epicurean garden. This is a happier situation than that described in Of Solitude, a Stoic state suitable only for the virtuous man who has subdued all passions and learnt the art of contemplation, for "Cogitation is the thing which distinguishes the Solitude of a God

from a wild Beast". (p. 394) The description of "Nature the wisest Architect", contrasted with the "Monster London" has a soft primitivst appeal. But the blessed state was short-lived:

> Oh Solitude, first state of Human-kind !
> Which blest remain'd till man did find
> Even his own helpers Company.
> As soon as two (alas !) together joyn'd,
> The Serpent made up Three. (p. 396)

The subject of the Fall was almost an obsession with the libertine. As we shall see later in this Chapter, and in the case of Sedley, it was usually presented from a soft primitivist point of view, and here again Cowley prefigures the trend whereby soft primitivism replaced the more neo-Stoic hard primitivism after the Restoration. Whereas Stoic thought tried to strike a balance between the demands of the active and the contemplative life, the philosophy of Epicurus favoured retirement exclusively. This is best exemplified in the life and works of Sir William Temple, the ultimate exponent of refined Epicureanism in England.

4 Temple

Sir William Temple has been described as "a Seventeenth Century 'Libertin'",[37] but the word as we have earlier defined it cannot accurately be applied to Temple, who was not a freethinker. Like Cowley, his high-minded Epicureanism was united with conventional Christianity. His sister, Lady Gifford, characterises him as a man of strong passions, but "giveing liberty only to those passions he did not thinke worth the care and pains it must cost to restrain them".[38] His naturally gay temper was subject to: "cruel

fitts of spleen and melancholy". But he loved music, sculpture, rural fresh air, conversation with friends, his garden, and exercise (when gout permitted). Though his taste in food was simple, he loved fruits and wine excessively, and: "thought life not worth the care many were at to preserve it, & yt twas not what we eat or drunke, but excess in either that was dangerous".

Lady Giffard suggests also her brother's brand of scepticism:

> His Religion was yt of the church of England he was borne and bred in, thought nobody ought to change since it must require more time & pains then ones life can furnish to make a true judgement of that which interest & folly were commonly the motives too ...

Yet Gilbert Burnet so far misunderstood Temple's beliefs that he wrote, in History of His Own Time:

> ... he thought religion was only for the mob. He was a great admirer of the sect of Confucius in China, who were atheists themselves, but left religion to the rabble. He was a corrupter of all that came near him. And he delivered himself up wholly to study, ease, and pleasure.[39]

Voltaire defended him from Burnet's attack,[40] adding that he loved Holland like his own country, on account of that liberty of which he was a jealous guardian, (and of which Pierre Bayle was a living example). However, Temple's reputation was dealt another severe blow by Macaulay.[41] The crux of the problem is a failure to understand or sympathise with Temple's retirement, which was not prompted by cowardice, as Johnson said Cowley's was,[42] but in accordance with principles which, though they were soon to go out of fashion, were strongly held and carefully explained.

The most personal of Temple's essays, Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or, Of Gardening, in the Year 1685 shows similarities with the thought of both Cowley and St. Evremond, but also important differences. The message of the essay is moderation, and it attacks luxury, the pursuit of riches and ambition.* It argues that: "the most exquisite delights of sense are pursued in the contrivance and plantation of gardens; which ... seem to furnish all the pleasures of the several senses".[43] This is the natural way, and Temple cites a number of historical rulers who have followed it. But another school said that a more certain way to ease and happiness in life was to subdue, or at least temper the passions, and reduce the appetites to the minimum nature requires.

Temple is of the opinion that all the schools were agreed that happiness was the chief good, and that it ought to be man's end. This being so, the argument was over what constituted happiness, and having said that it polarised supporters of the Stoics and the Epicureans, he tries to show that the two are really indistinguishable on this point:

> The Stoics would have it to consist in virtue, and the Epicureans in pleasure; yet the most reasonable of the Stoics made the pleasure of virtue to be the greatest happiness; and the best of the Epicureans made the greatest pleasure to consist in virtue; and the difference between these two seems not easily discovered. (p. 6)

They seem to agree, he continues: that the passions need to be tempered; that true pleasure lies in temperance rather than in

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* Cf. Cowley's Essays. Temple also attacks avarice and honour in An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning (ed. Monk, pp. 68-9). Monk shows Temple's indebtedness to Dr. Walter Charleton's Epicurus's Morals (1656), and concludes: "Temple's Epicureanism is at once more casual than Charleton's and more serious than St. Evremond's". (pp. xix-xxiii)

satisfying the senses; that one should regard the enjoyments and vicissitudes of life with equal indifference; that one should not disturb the mind with sad reflections on what is past, or cares or hopes for the future; that one should accept death with equanimity; and that in all things one should follow nature. (pp. 6-7) In arguing that a man's happiness consisted in tranquillity of mind and indolence of body the Epicureans were simply "more intelligible in their notion and fortunate in their expression" than others, such as the Stoics and the Sceptics, who were really saying the same thing. However, Temple here overlooks the Stoics' view of nature, which Senault had felt the need to reiterate in The Use of Passions (1649).*

In view of Epicurus's apparent similarity with the Stoics, Temple finds it surprising that he should have such a bad reputation. After all, his "admirable wit, felicity of expression, excellence of nature, sweetness of conversation, temperance of life, and constancy of death, made him so beloved by his friends, admired by his scholars, and honoured by the Athenians". (pp. 7-8) Temple alludes to those who have defended him, notably the "sincere and impartial" testimonies of Diogenes Laertius, and includes among his sect Caesar, Atticus, Maecenas, Lucretius, Virgil and Horace. He adduces three reasons for the hostility toward Epicurus:

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*See above, Chapter II, p. 123.

> the envy and malignity of the Stoics at first, then ... the mistakes of some gross pretenders to his sect (who took pleasure only to be sensual) and afterwards ... the piety of the primitive Christians, who esteemed his principles of natural philosophy more opposite to those of our religion than either the Platonists, the Peripatetics, or Stoics themselves. (p. 8)

On the latter point, Temple does not see why Lucretius's account of the gods should be considered any more impious than that of Homer, who attributes to them the weakest passions and the meanest actions of men. Regarding matural philosophy, Temple has earlier stated his total scepticism:

> But all the different schemes of nature that have been drawn of old, or of late, by Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, DesCartes, Hobbs, or any other that I know of, seem to agree but in one thing, which is the want of demonstration or satisfaction to any thinking and unpossessed man. (pp. 5-6)

Having singled out Lucretius, Virgil and Horace as the greatest philosophers as well as the best poets of their nation or age, Temple goes on to tackle the question of retirement. All the different sects of philosophers, he says, are agreed that a wise man should abstain from public affairs, above all because they considered public business "too sordid and too artificial for the cleanness and simplicity of their manners and lives", and more inimical than anything else to "that tranquillity of mind, which they esteemed and taught to be the only true felicity of man". (p. 10) This was why Epicurus chose to pass his life in a garden, a location where: "the exemption from cares and solicitude seem equally to favour and improve both contemplation and health, the enjoyment of sense and imagination, and thereby the quiet and ease both of the body and mind". (p. 10)

In addition to classical primitivist sources, Temple enlists Christian doctrine and the Christian motif of the Earthly Paradise in his praise of gardens:

> If we believe the Scripture, we must allow that God Almighty esteemed the life of a man in a garden the happiest he could give him, or else he would not have placed Adam in that of Eden; that it was the state of innocence and pleasure; and that the life of husbandry and cities came after the fall, with guilt and with labour. (p. 11)

Though the location of Paradise is open to debate, the type of place that it was is easier to establish. Temple explains that the word is a Persian one, signifying a pleasure garden, defined as a large enclosed space of ground, with trees - either a garden or a park. (p. 11)*

Temple is best remembered today for his role in the Ancients versus Moderns controversy. This sterile dispute, of which Swift's Battle of the Books is almost the only worthwhile product, had been carried on through the seventeenth century in the form of a debate over the possibility of progress. The ancients often had recourse to the depressing theory of the decay of nature to prove their argument that progress was impossible in view of the corruption of man and the world. The dispute was given new impetus by the formation of the Royal Society, with its enthusiastic belief that its experiments would benefit humanity and assist mankind's progress. Temple's Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning (1690) has done his modern reputation no good, but, misguided as the work is in parts, its author is not the authoritarian reactionary

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*The spirit of the Essay finds expression in Pope's Epistle IV To Burlington, ll. 47-98.

of popular belief. In this essay Temple argues from a standpoint of moderation, and his relativist position is often apparent in other essays. He does not say that the ancients are superior to the moderns in absolute terms, merely that the moderns are not superior to the ancients.[44]

Temple's scepticism made him wary of asserting the absolute superiority of any one period of history over another. As Samuel Holt Monk has demonstrated by drawing attention to a passage in the Essay upon the Original and Nature of Government (1672), Temple ignores the current theory of the social compact, fashionable since Hobbes, and argues that society originated with the family.[45] In the Essay upon ... Government he also employs the argument, already familiar to us from other Restoration libertines, that laws are mere customs sanctioned by long use.[46] It has in addition been pointed out that Temple uses the modern scientific method of observation of details and induction from them in all his writings about politics, indicating a natural, if perhaps unrecognised sympathy for the methods of Baconian science when applied to a field he knew well.[47] It is paradoxical that Temple, defender of the ancients in the controversy, shared much of the temper of the moderns, and that his opponent Richard Bentley, the greatest classical scholar of his time, was on the same side as William Wotton, the defender of the Royal Society and an enthusiastic modern.[48]

In his retirement at Sheen and Moor Park for the last eighteen years of his life, after a highly distinguished political career, Temple is the last great Epicurean of the seventeenth century.

Despite the joyfully hedonistic celebration of the pleasures of a garden, and the loving discussion of fruit cultivation which form the largest part of Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, his own retirement, like Cowley's, was probably not entirely happy, for gout and domestic tragedy distorted his Epicurean calm. Like Cowley too, he translated Virgil's praise of the husbandman in the second Georgic, which was to be so much part of eighteenth century consciousness, and which links Cowley's retirement to Pope's. Temple was like the libertins in being eclectic, and his Epicureanism is united with both conventional Anglicanism and philosophical scepticism.

5 The amorous bower

Temple's remark in Upon the Gardens of Epicurus that Epicurean and Stoic were not mutually exclusive* was in accord with the practice of Restoration translators. We have noted briefly how Dryden gave the lead in softening the Stoic elements which the early seventeenth century had emphasised in Horace and Virgil, such as the toil of the husbandman, and stressed instead the elements of ease, plenty, and a repose free from care. Lucretius has no parva rura motif, since he believed that happiness was embodied in a state of complete rest, which Dryden rendered as "A Soul serene, a body void of pain".[49] This contrasts with the labour of the farmer in Virgil's second Georgic, although in other respects there are resemblances between Virgil's farmer and the detached spectator at the beginning of the Second Book of De Natura Rerum. The

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*See above, p. 157.

interest in Lucretius resulted in (or was a reflection of) soft primitivism replacing the harder primitivism of Virgil and Horace. Dryden's translation of this famous passage, dealing with the detached spectator's compensations for retiring from the luxury of the court, is typical of his age:

> Yet on the grass, beneath a poplar shade,
> By the cool stream our careless limbs are lay'd,
> With cheaper pleasures innocently blest,
> When the warm Spring with gaudy flow'rs is drest. (p. 404)

There is a lengthier and more intensely soft primitivist appeal in his rendition of the beginning of the First Book. This is possibly the "certain luscious part of Lucretius", which Brown, calling the kettle black, criticises Dryden for translating, on the grounds that it is fit "only to keep company with Culpeppers Midwife, or the English translation of Aloysia Sigea [a pornographic work by Nicholas Chorier] ".[50]

Miss Røstvig shows in detail how Dryden accentuates the Epicurean in Horace, Virgil, and even Juvenal, and she gives some examples of a similar process at work in the Miscellanies that Dryden edited in the 1680's and 1690's, to which Rochester, Wolseley, Otway, Flatman and Mackenzie contributed versions of Horace's <u>Odes</u> emphasising the erotic. In this way, she says:

> the motivation for seeking solitude or country life was given an Epicurean slant. As the century wore on, the <u>res rusticae</u> were gradually covered by a veneer of fine polish which made them as attractive as any of the scenes of ambition so ostentatiously spurned. Obscurity became synonymous with ease, and a frugal simplicity with true pleasure. (pp. 251-2)

Miss Røstvig goes on to describe how the Restoration cult of friendship is a development of the Platonic <u>précieux</u> cult of the earlier half of the century, with the addition of Epicurean arguments.

love. Some of the impetus for this came from French poetry, which was translated by Thomas Stanley, Roscommon, Philip Ayres and Aphra Behn, among others. In St. Amant's La Jouyssance, translated by Stanley in 1651, nature and everything else is subordinated to the voluptuous enjoyment which has motivated the lovers' retirement:

> Now with delight transported, I
> My wreathed Arms about her tie;
> The latt'ring Ivie never holds
> Her Husband Elme in stricter Folds,
> To cool my fervent Thirst, I sip
> Delicious Nectar from her lip.
> She pledges, and so often past
> This amorous health, till Love at last,
> Our Souls did with these pleasures sate,
> And equally inebriate.[52]

Roscommon's The Grove, one of the most frequently reprinted poems of this period, makes equally incidental use of the landscape of retirement. Love is also the dominant theme in Philip Ayres's His Retirement, In Praise of a Country Life, and other of his Lyric Poems (1687). Horace's Odes supply some precedents for this, and Donne is sometimes an important influence here, as can be seen particularly in Stanley's The Bracelet, and in his arguments for variety and freedom in Love's Heretic. Suckling is another native poet who springs to mind - and there are others, such as Carew, and Waller. William Walsh, Dryden's friend, and later Pope's, shows Cowley's influence, in The Retirement, in denouncing vice. He too pays only lip service to the scenery: the poem is really a celebration of his happy monogamous love, "confin'd to one".[53] On the other hand, To his Mistress. Against marriage puts the opposite view:

> Nor ought those things to be confin'd,
> That were for publick good design'd.[54]

This was an age which revelled in paradox - and teasing mistresses.

The speech of Lucina in Rochester's Valentinian III ii embodies an alluringly soft primitivist eroticism. The lull which this short scene, set in "Grove and Forest", provides, is in marked contrast to Valentinian's destructive energy. But it is only the calm before the impending rape, and this dramatic irony makes Lucina's innocent joy in married love all the more poignant:

> Dear solitary Groves where Peace does dwell,
> Sweet Harbours of pure Love and Innocence !
> How willingly could I for ever stay
> Beneath the shade of your embracing Greens,
> Listening to Harmony of warbling Birds,
> Tun'd with the gentle Murmurs of the Streams, ...
> Expressing some kind innocent Design
> To shew my Maximus at his Return
> And fondly chiding make his Heart confess
> How far my busie Idleness excels,
> The idle Business he persues all day,
> At the contentious Court or clamorous Camp
> Robbing my Eyes of what they love to see,
> My Ears of his dear Words they wish to hear
> My longing Arms of th' Embrace they covet:
> Forgive me, Heav'n ! If when I these enjoy,
> So perfect is the happiness I find
> That my Soul satisfi'd feels no Ambition
> To change these humble Roots and sit above.[55]

Lucina is an embodiment of Cowley's virtues, shunning ambition, business and the court, in marked contrast to Valentinian, the iconoclastic libertine, who considere himself the equal of the Gods who "sit above".

Rather less subtly, Thomas Otway's Epistle from Mr. Otway to Mr. Duke praises Horace's erotic verse: With Thoughts of Love, and Wine, by him we're fir'd,/Two Things in sweet Retirement much desir'd." The physical desires are paramount in "this sweet Retreat", where:

> No Cares or Business here disturb our Hours,
> While underneath these shady, peaceful Bow'rs,
> In cool Delight and Innocence we stray,
> And midst a thousand Pleasures waste the Day.[56]

This is the innocence of the unconscious animal, rather than that of the conscious man, who, through purification of his sense experience, regains the spiritual innocence of Adam. The senses are sated, rather than refined, when "each takes th' obedient Treasure of his Heart,/And leads her willing to his silent Bed," where "ev'ry Sense with perfect Pleasure's fed", until "in full Joy dissolv'd, each falls asleep/With twining Limbs, that still Love's Posture keep." The depths of pornographic cliché to which the genre was apt to descend is well exemplified by Otway's The Enjoyment.[57]

Love is a favourite subject of Aphra Behn's. She deals with it at greatest length in her prose allegory of love's progress, Lycidus: or, the Lover in Fashion (1688), a kind of erotic Pilgrim's Progress, and in A Voyage to the Isle of Love, translated freely from the French of Paul Tallemant, a long poem which treats many allied libertine themes, such as honour, in addition to love itself. In A Voyage to the Isle of Love, as in a number of her lyrics, the place of retirement is presented as an amorous bower:

> Where Love invents a thousand Plays,
> Where Lovers act ten thousand Joys:
> . . . . . .
> Recesses Dark, and Grotto's all conspire,
> To favour Love and soft desire;
> Shades, Springs, and Fountains flowry Beds,
> To Joys invites, to Pleasure leads,
> To Pleasure which all Humane thought exceeds.[58]

In The Golden Age, her best known poem on this subject, free love has supreme importance, although all the other traditional components

of the Golden Age are there too. For example, scorned shepherds were not in those days tortured by love, jealousy or fear, and: "Then it was glory to pursue delight". (p. 140) This happy man's greatest enemy was a wrong sense of honour, which belongs only among the vicious, the ambitious and "the Great". Over two stanzas of The Golden Age are devoted to denouncing honour, and the arguments used against it include the carpe diem type, of poems such as Marvell's To His Coy Mistress.*

The nostalgic yearning for the return of the Golden Age strongly embodies a freedom from those constraints which the libertine customarily attacked:

> The Lovers thus, thus uncontroul'd did meet,
> Thus all their Joyes and Vows of Love repeat:
> Joyes which were everlasting, ever new
> And every Vow inviolably true:
> Not kept in fear of Gods, no fond Religious cause,
> Nor in obedience to the duller Laws.
> Those Fopperies of the Gown were then not known,
> Those vain, those Politick Curbs to keep man in,
> Who by a fond mistake created that a Sin;
> Which freeborn we, by right of Nature claim our own.
> Who but the Learned and dull moral Fool
> Could gravely have forseen man ought to live by Rule ?
> (p. 141)

The attack on religion and the law as inconvenient restraints on the lover's natural freedom is similar to libertine statements in poems by Oldham, Ames, Ward and other satirists, which will be examined later.

In her poem On the Author of that Excellent book Intituled the Way to Health, Long Life, and Happiness Mrs Behn expresses her ideal

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* Cf. also Voyage to the Island of Love, pp. 278-80. The disparagement of honour had formed a strong undercurrent in Renaissance literature. In I Henry IV, for example, Hotspur's conventional views on the subject, stated hyperbolically, are parodied in prose, by Falstaff, who in this and other respects is a forerunner of the Restoration libertine. See above, Chapter II, p. 98, for other examples. Falstaff is discussed in Chapter IV, pp. 207, 235.

of the Golden Age as a time "when Man was young,/When the whole Race was Vigorous and strong". The earth, then untilled, yielded its products to "the Noble Savage", whom "every Sense to innocent delight/Th' agreeing Elements unforc'd invite". This picture of a time "When Earth was gay, and Heaven was kind and bright" contrasts with what followed:

> ... wild Debauchery did Mens mind invade,
> And Vice, and Luxury became a Trade;
> Surer than War it laid whole Countrys wast,
> Nor Plague nor Famine ruins half so fast;
> By swift degrees we took that Poison in,
> Regarding not the danger, nor the sin;
> Delightful, Gay, and Charming was the Bait,
> While Death did on th' inviting Pleasure wait,
> And ev'ry Age produc'd a feebler Race, ...
> Till Nature thus declining by degrees,
> We have recourse to rich restoratives,
> By dull advice from some of Learned Note,
> We take the Poison for the Antidote;
> Till sinking Nature cloy'd with full supplys,
> O'er-charged grows fainter, Languishes and dies.
> These are the Plagues that o'er this Island reign,
> And have so many threescore thousands slain. (p. 380)

Here Mrs. Behn portrays a Golden Age of hard primitivism, approaching Juvenal's ideal of "Mens sana in corpore sano". Her satiric portrait of present vice, with the figure of the decay of nature to denote the lamented ravages of venereal disease striking a realistic note, would seem to set Aphra Behn firmly on the conservative, "ancient" side, her denunciation of luxury anticipating a popular work like Brown's Estimate (1757). But this stance is atypical of her work. By contrast, the last section of the poem is a panegyric, which elevates mystical health advocate and social reformer Thomas Tryon to the status of a "saving Angel", divinely inspired to "Give us long life, and lasting Vertue too". This brands her as a romantic, soft primitivist.

Sir George Mackenzie, in A Moral Paradox: Maintaining That it is much easier to be VIRTUOUS than VITIOUS (1669), had maintained that "happiness consists in ease", which is "That happiest of States, and root of all Perfections". (pp. 6, 9) Anticipating Shaftesbury, he believed that virtue was inherent in man's nature, so that the pursuit of virtue was conducive to ease, whereas vice required a conscious effort. A similar belief in the perfection of natural man underlies a number of Aphra Behn's poems. It is easy to be virtuous, she says, one only has to revert to the state of nature, which is characterised (in addition to tranquillity and indolence) by virtue. Besides false honour, the particular corruptions which must be stripped away are ambition, avarice and immoderate desire: largely those of Cowley's Essays. If these destructive passions can be eradicated, it is possible to regain a state of nature where reason, inherent in all men, reigns supreme, and where the appearance of those passions does not upset man's mental and emotional balance.

In a letter to Mrs. Price, Aphra Behn declares that "there's no Satisfaction to be found amidst an Urban Throng (as Mr. Bayes calls it)." She says she is sorry that her correspondent's taste is "so deprav'd" that she cannot taste the joys of country life:

> The peaceful Place where gladly I resort,
> Is freed from noisy Factions of the Court:
> There joy's with viewing o'er the rural Scene,
> Pleas'd with the Meadows ever green,
> The Woods and Groves with tuneful Anger move,
> And Nought is heard but gentle Sighs of Love. (p. 397)

The argument that it is a sign of depravity not to be able to experience such innocent pleasures is not very far from the Ranters'

view that the ability to distinguish between good and evil indicated that one had eaten from the tree of knowledge, thereby sharing Adam's corruption. But the semi-primitivistic philosophy of rural retirement which Mrs. Behn is advocating had been associated, ever since its first popularity in the Civil Wars, with Royalist, conservative writers. Their values are aristocratic, and opposed to those of the rising middle classes, whose moneyed interests are attacked in the opening lines of A Farewel to Celladon, On his Going into Ireland:

> Bus'ness Debauches all his hours of Love;
> Bus'ness, whose hurry, noise, and news
> Even Natures self subdues;
> Changes her best and first simplicity,
> Her soft, her easie quietude
> Into mean Arts of cunning Policy.* (p. 145)

Two previously noted aspects of libertine thought are apparent in this passage: the idea of art being a form of trickery imposed on nature's original simplicity; and the rejection of the middle-class work ethic, which was alluded to in the case of the Ranters. It was really only during the Restoration period that libertinism flourished. Earlier and later libertines may be seen as fighting a kind of rearguard action against what D.H. Lawrence called "The work-cash-want circle ... the viciousest circle that ever turned men into fiends".[59]

Aphra Behn's emphasis lay on free love. In A Farewell, Ireland is presented as an earthly paradise, where she hopes that

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* Etherege makes a similar distinction between Pleasure and "the worst sort of Business, wicked Politics," but then admits that the Germans' "Affairs (let them be never so serious and pressing) never put a stop to good Eating and Drinking, and that they debate their weightiest Negotiations over their Cups." (Letterbook, p. 413).

Celladon (her husband), who was born for "Glorious and Luxurious Ease", will find happiness in solitude, and freedom from business, "With some dear Shee, whom Nature made,/To be possest by him alone..." (p. 147). Such poetry as this of Aphra Behn's, and Otway's, prompted Shadwell, who had parodied pastoral in The Libertine, to begin The Tory-poets: A Satyr (1682):

> Happy are they in Amorous Fields, that Rove
> And Sing no other Songs then those of love;
> Whose Verses treat of nought but careless ease,
> And in their Sonnets only strive to please.[60]

Shadwell is somewhat self-righteously implying that his own purpose was the higher one of moral instruction. A rare exception to the rule that before 1700 only Tories wrote poetry expressing an Epicurean ideal of retirement is the Whig dissenter John Tutchin. His essay A Discourse of Life, printed with his Poems on Several Occasions (1685), paraphrases Cowley. To Tutchin, solitude is "an Antidote against all the raging Plagues of the Tumultuous World".[61] As a Whig moral reformer, his primary object is to attack those "plagues". However, it was not until the publication of John Pomfret's The Choice (1700) that the use of rural retirement for these ends gained wide popularity, eventually finding its way into the rhetoric of nonconformists such as Wesley and Isaac Watts.*

The theme of The Rake Reform'd: A Poem. In a Letter to the Rakes of the Town (1718), by one "A.G. Gent.", is the superiority of the true pleasures of the simple rural life, compared to "th' imaginary Joy" of his youthful debauches. The vice of the town is contrasted with the innocence of the country, where the men are

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*Cf. also The Grove: Or, The Rival Muses (1701), in POAS (1707), 4, 356.

"unacquainted with, or Fraud, or Fear,/Whose Words are artless, and whose Souls sincere". These simple country folk embody nature uncorrupted by art, and particularly the art of fraud and the motive of fear associated with the libertine philosophies of Machievelli and Hobbes. However, the reformed rake is in the position of a privileged spectator, who may "With Pleasure view the Toils, the rural Pains,/And honest Labours of th'industrious Swains", without having to undergo them himself. It is easy enough to remain serenely detached under such conditions. The rake even uses a variation of the Lucretian figure of the detached spectator, to demonstrate how "art" can deceive one into a false sense of security:

> Thus trembling Sailors when the Winds arise,
> And forky Lightning thro' the Welkin flies,
> Perceive their Vessels by the Tempest driv'n,
> And bandy'd by th'Artillery of Heav'n:
> In vain does Art its utmost Efforts boast,
> Whilst in Amazement and Confusion lost,
> They cannot see the Rocks on which they're tost:
> But when the warring Elements again
> Withdraw their Fury, and their Force restrain,
> And peaceful Waves flow curling on the Main;
> With Pleasure and Surprize at once they view
> Those Dangers which before they never knew. (pp. 6-7)

The middle section of the poem consists of a catalogue of the actions of a typical rake, which would probably be familiar to many readers from poems such as Ames's <u>The Rake</u> and Ward's <u>The Libertine's Choice</u>.* This rake says he was brought to "sincere Repentance" by his best friend's death as a result of debauchery, and he "chang'd the <u>City</u>'s Fogs for <u>Isis</u> healthy Air" (p. 20), so that now "From

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*See below, Chapter V, pp. 314-21.

Town retir'd, and undisturb'd with Care," he can "Enjoy the Blessings of a wholsome Air". The last twelve pages of the poem are a boring and self-satisfied account of his new-found joy in the country. He concludes priggishly:

> Thus, I, serene and free from Noise and Strife,
> Enjoy the sweet Retirements of Life;
> For then alone in Bliss compleatly whole,
> When with the Body we advance the Soul. (p. 32)

As with Burridge's Religio Libertini, the self-congratulation is more nauseating than the vices which preceded his reformation.

Few of the wits whom Tutchin opposed attacked middle-class morality so strongly as William Wycherley. His poem Honour, an Enemy to Love supports Aphra Behn's view of honour. In Chloris enjoy'd in her Sleep he demonstrates, in the manner of Rochester, how Chloris, by feigning sleep, satisfies herself that she is remaining "Just to thy Honour, and my love".[62] Wycherley's Epicurean belief in the happiness of ease and privacy is proclaimed by such titles as Ease, the Wish and Endeavour of all Men, lost by their too eager Pursuit of it, In Praise of Laziness,* and Upon the Idleness of Business. A Satyr. The opening lines of For Solitude and Retirement against the Publick, Active Life attack "Ambition, Av'rice, Vanity, and Pride", and argue for "Safety, Innocence and full Repose". The rural scene is "A Type of Paradise", from which the detached spectator "may laugh, in Privacy and Ease,/At guilty Grandeur, and its Fopperies". (p. 206) The object is to "Gain Ease and Peace, at which we All aspire". The "More Ease, Peace, Safety to our selves we gain,/As we from Publick Commerce more abstain". (p. 207) Consistent with the attitude expressed here is Wycherley's satire on

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*Dryden, in a joking letter to Etherege, probably the laziest of the Wits, also extols laziness (Letterbook, ed. Rosenfeld, pp. 355-7).

the court in To a Young Gentleman, who ask'd the Author's Advice, whether he should turn Courtier. The fact that he also wrote For the publick Active Life, against Solitude demonstrates nothing so much as his love of moral paradox. This is borne out by the terse four stanzas of A Song, in praise of Solitude, arguing for a wise self-sufficiency, which is a good demonstration of the essentially egoistical nature of Epicureanism, but without reducing it to a Swiftian parody:

> Most Happy he himself may boast,
> Whose Happiness depends on none;
> Who for his knowing this World most,
> Lives in it, to it, most unknown;
> Who scorning to Proud Knaves, or Fools, to creep,
> For Want of Pride, does Distance with 'em Keep;
>
> Who, but the more for his Self-Love,
> For others has more Charity;
> His Innocence, but more to prove,
> Does hide his Head most Hon'rably;
> Who but the more, for his Wise Selfishness,
> Of Avarice, or Vanity, has less;
>
> Who but much more the wiser grows,
> As of the World more ignorant;
> More Self-sufficiency he shows,
> Shows less his Pride, his Fear, or Want,
> Is to himself a God on Earth alone,
> In Want of no Good, since in Care for none;
>
> So Solitude, just Selfishness,
> Does the World's Selfishness prevent;
> Makes Man's Peace more, as his Fear less,
> Him more safe, as more innocent;
> To gain more Honour, Ease, for want of Pelf,
> By Content, all-sufficient to himself. (pp. 13-14)

Equally unsentimental is the paradox in Against Atheism (pp. 182-4). Like Sedley at his best, Wycherley is able to transcend the limitations of libertine themes to achieve universal truths. The ironic and sceptical predilection is virtually essential for success here.

There is a world of difference between the romantic fantasies of a paradise à deux and the satiric, anti-romantic tenor of most of the poetic output of, say, Rochester or Oldham, which often expresses a savage misogyny, or, in their better manifestations, a more controlled animus. Wycherley's poems (which were revised by Pope, himself a great advocate of retirement)[63] were written after his dramatic career had ended, and although a number of different points of view are expressed in them, the dominant motive for his professed embracing of retirement appears to be primarily satiric rather than hedonistic. Similarly, though it is possible to read The Country Wife as a justification for the libertine code of behaviour, it is at the same time pretty clear that the code is basically rather an unattractive one - though necessary in such a society, the corruption of which the libertine spokesman is designed to expose. Many of the characters in Wycherley's plays are as unpleasant as those that appear in Rochester's Tunbridge Wells and Artemisia to Chloe, to which poems The Country Wife and The Plain Dealer are dramatic analogues.[64] Not for nothing was Wycherley known as "the Plain Dealer" and "brawny Wycherley". Manly's very name tells the audience that there is something masculine and honourable in his position, which sets him apart from sentimental primitivists and hypocrites alike. Wycherley sees and presents both sides of the question, and leaves the audience or readers to draw their own conclusions. As a member of the circle of the Court Wits, this part of his ethos properly belongs in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER IV THE HEYDAY OF LIBERTINISM

1 The milieu of the Court Wits

The Court Wits held sway virtually unopposed from before 1665 to about 1680. They formed a coterie in the true sense, holding shared assumptions about life, and they exerted a tremendous influence over the literature of the period, most of which was produced either by them or under their patronage. Never before or since has the libertine ethic had such widespread expression.

John Harold Wilson has characterised the unusual combination of circumstances which produced the Court Wits as:

> ... a closely knit, aristocratic society, a violent reaction against enforced morality, a cynical carpe diem philosophy, and a monarch who, himself a Wit, valued and protected his witty companions.[1]

It was this group which made fashionable the libertine temper that suffused Restoration comedy and aristocratic society. I intend to demonstrate its assumptions from the Wits' own writings. First, however, it will be helpful to summarise briefly Professor Wilson's examination of the Wits and their ethos, before turning to specific individuals and their works.

We may exclude at the outset professional poets and dramatists, even if, like Dryden and Shadwell, they were wits. Our concern is with a group of men who had no need to write for a living, but who did so mainly for their own and the others' amusement. Pope rather contemptuously referred to them as: "the Mob of Gentlemen who wrote with Ease".[2] The King himself was the first of the Wits, and there were fourteen other fully accredited Wits, as well as

several more who were never permanent members of the coterie. In order of seniority, the Wits were: George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, who had been a boon companion to the King since childhood, and who had the most distinguished political career of any of the Wits; Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, who became Earl of Dorset in 1677, an easy-going rake, with a talent for light verse; John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, who became Duke of Buckingham in 1703, Dorset's inferior as a man of letters; Lord John Vaughan, Earl of Carbery in 1685, a man of no literary achievement, who was described by Pepys as "one of the lewdest fellows of the age, worse than Sir Charles Sidly";[3] John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester; Sir Charles Sedley, known as "Little Sid", to distinguish him from Sir Carr Scroope; Sir George Etherege ("Gentle George"); William Wycherley; Henry Savile, the fat, eloquent men of letters and diplomat, brother of George Savile, Lord Halifax; Fleetwood Shepherd, knighted in 1694; Henry Bulkeley; Henry Killigrew; and Henry Guy. All these were important members of the circle, who helped to share in influencing literary taste. Others who hovered on the edge of the group included the poets Waller and Butler, as well as Lord Middleton, Godolphin, and Francis Newport.

Butler was Secretary to Carbery, and later to Buckingham. He was therefore in an ideal position to observe the Wits, and although he shared their views on most things, he did not refrain on that account from satirising their excesses. Just as he had ridiculed the Puritans for making their notion of an "inner light" the excuse for immoral behaviour, so he equates "A Degenerate Noble" with "a

Fanatic".[4] The Noble's idea that wickedness is a privilege owed to his "empty Title of Honour" could have been applied to the arrogant assumptions behind many of the Wits' actions, although they themselves were careful to distinguish, at least in their own minds, between their excessive indulgence in the pleasures of love and the bottle, and the mindless criminality of non-literary rakes such as Jermyn, May, Brouncker, Blood, the Duke of Monmouth, and the half-mad Earl of Pembroke. Aubrey says of the latter that he "has at Wilton, 52 mastives and 30 grey-hounds, some beares, and a lyon, and a matter of 60 fellowes more bestiall than they".[5] Oldham, citing some of the very real dangers of walking the streets of London, in A Satyr in Imitation of the Third of Juvenal, associates "Pembroke and his Mastiffs loose" with "the drunken Scowrers of the Street", predecessors of John Gay's violent Mohocks:

> Who's there ? he cries, and takes you by the Throat,
> Dog ! are you dumb ? Speak quickly, else my Foot
> Shall march about your Buttocks: whence d'ye come,
> From what Bulk-ridden Strumpet reeking home ?
> Saving your reverend Pimpship, where d'ye ply ?
> How may one have a Job of Lechery ?
> If you say any thing, or hold your Peace,
> And silently go off; 'tis all a Case:
> Still he lays on: nay well, if you scape so:
> Perhaps he'l clap an Action on you too
> Of Battery: nor need he fear to meet
> A Jury to his Turn, shall do him Right,
> And bring him in large Damage for a Shooe
> Worn out, besides the Pains, in kicking You.
> A Poor Man must expect nought of Redress,
> But Patience: his best in such a Case
> Is to be thankful for the Drubs, and beg
> That they would mercifully spare one Leg,
> Or Arm unbroke, and let him go away
> With Teeth enough to eat his Meat next Day.[6]

In a similar passage in The Thirteenth Satire of Juvenal, Imitated, Oldham describes "the mad Crew/Of hect'ring Blades, who for slight Cause, or none,/At every Turn, are into Passion blown":

And, at the summons of each tiny Drab,
Cry, Dammnee ! Satisfaction ! draw, and stab. (II, p. 37)

The Duke of Monmouth's lethal activities are related in A Ballad called the Haymarket Hectors (1671) and Upon the Beadle (1671). In the latter "the gallant Monmouth" is ironically made to complain:

Curs'd be their politic heads that first began
To circumscribe the liberties of man,
Man that was truli'st happy when of old
His actions, like his will, were uncontroll'd,
Till he submitted his great soul to awe
And suffer'd fear to fetter him with law - ... [7]

Dryden makes the same point about the dangerous anarchy of the Hobbist state of nature more subtly in Absalom and Achitophel.[8] But even he does not absolve what he ironically styles the "mild nature" of "warlike Absalom" from responsibility for "Amnon's murder". Rochester's Farewell (1680), which Pope thought "Probably by the Ld Dorset",[9] asks:

..., where is he
Fam'd for that brutal piece of bravery ?
He with that thick impenetrable skull
(The solid harden'd armor of a fool)
Well might himself to all war's ills expose
Who (come what will) yet had no brains to lose.
Yet this is he, the dull unthinking he,
Who must (forsooth) our future monarch be: ... [10]

Such homicidal bullies, lacking style or wit, were anathema to the Wits. Their own escapades were in the nature of undergraduate pranks rather than dangerous criminal acts, though the drunken brawls in which Rochester and others were involved did sometimes have fatal consequences. But they were basically respectable citizens, holding, by virtue of their birth, responsible

positions in the personal service of the King, in the armed forces and in Parliament. They believed that their own excesses were licensed by "right reason", and in their lampoons they libelled those whose sins went beyond reason, or were committed unthinkingly. Their victims were the fools, hypocrites, sycophants and criminals who have always been the satirist's particular targets. Personal animus was often a strong factor: many of the verses born of the numerous literary and personal quarrels, which most of the Wits were involved in, are as savage as Pope at his most waspish.

If Cowley was exceptional in preferring rural retirement to the celebrations of his fellow Royalists after 1660, there were others for whom flirtation with the Court was short-lived. Many of the old Cavaliers were puzzled and shocked by the new morality of Charles II's Court. As early as 1661 the narrator of The Cavalier's Complaint, already disillusioned with the Restoration, resolves to "get me fairly out of town/And in a cloister pray". In the same collection, A Contest Between the Court and the Country advances hedonistic arguments in favour of the superiority of the country.[11] The retirement poem still flourished, and in the hands of a Cavalier such as Charles Cotton its appeal was often hedonistic too; while Aphra Behn, in particular, and other professional poets, had given it a more erotic content. But for all that, retirement poetry was out of fashion. Libertines tended to despise the country, because it lacked the human refinements which town life provided. Behind this preference lay their realisation that they possessed superior qualities which needed to be catered for, in

addition to the satisfaction of the animal passions. Theirs is, by and large, the view expressed by the rakes in Restoration comedy. It reflects the preference for action rather than contemplation, for the pleasures of motion rather than those of rest. But it also incorporates an awareness of the limitations of purely physical pleasures, reinforced by the almost universal acceptance of matrimony in the last Act.

The typical lyric product of the Wits was the song of love to Phyllis or Chloris, in the tradition of Tibullus, Catullus and Horace, a tradition followed earlier in the century by poets such as Lovelace, Waller and Herrick, and well exemplified by Dorset's Song ("Phillis, for shame let us improve").[12] Although they thought of themselves as the disciples of Horace, the Court poets were really closer to Anacreon, Catullus and Ovid. Phyllis, like Ovid's Corinna (whose name also appears in Restoration lyrics), was one woman and every woman, all loves rolled into one. The songs were written to amuse, and they display a reaction against the now unfashionable romantic love. Instead, they celebrate carnal love, or in other words lust. But even in such songs, the sighing, romantic lover was still much in evidence, as Dorset's parody of the genre shows:

> Methinks the poor town has been troubled too long,
> With Phillis and Chloris in every song;
> By fools, who at once can both love and despair,
> And will never leave calling 'em cruel and fair.[13]

Doreet goes on to celebrate "The truth that I know of bonny black Bess" in appropriately earthy terms. This song is the Restoration equivalent of Shakespeare's anti-Petrarchan Sonnet 130: "My

mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun".* In the Wits' verses, the body was superior to the mind, the pleasures of motion to those of rest. Chivalric love was merely irrational madness, and right reason was the true guide to conduct.

In addition to the disparagement of the outmoded notion of honour which we have already noted in the poems of Aphra Behn and others, the Wits used rationalistic arguments in their love songs to overcome the romantic attitude of an unwilling mistress. There was a precedent for this in such poems as Carew's Persuasions to Enjoy. Dorset, in Advice to Lovers ("Damon, if thou wilt believe me"), and again in The Advice ("Would you in Love succeed, be Brisk, be Gay"), counsels that the mistress will be more appreciative of a ravishing than of the sighs and tears of the unrequited lover. The same assumption is behind his portrayal of the disappointment of Chloris in Knotting ("At Noon, in a Sunshiny Day").[14] One of the earliest of Rochester's poems to be published, The Advice, also concerns this theme,+ but it is a rather clumsy Ovidian imitation, although the actual arguments advanced for Celia's submission are more complex than those which Dorset's shepherds use. The Rochester canon also contains examples of the mock-pastoral episode, with its burlesque touches; and of the pornographic narrative, in imitation of poems such as Carew's A Rapture. Speaking as one of the masters

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* Petrarch is singled out as the greatest modern offender against the ancients' ideal of being natural in love verses, by William Walsh, in the Preface to his Letters and Poems, Amorous and Gallant (1692), an illuminating discussion of Restoration critical theory on these matters. (The Works of the most celebrated Minor Poets (1749), II, pp. 58-62).

+ A later example of the "Advice" poem is Matthew Prior's Advice to a Lady (The Literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. H.B. Wright and M.K. Spears (Oxford, 1959), I, 712).

of such genres, Rochester in An Allusion to Horace, testifies to Sedley's success with the mode:

> For songs and verses mannerly obscene,
> That can stir nature up by springs unseen,
> And without forcing blushes, warm the Queen -
> Sedley has that prevailing gentle art,
> That can with a resistless charm impart
> The loosest wishes to the chastest heart;
> Raise such a conflict, kindle such a fire,
> Betwixt declining virtue and desire,
> Till the poor vanquished maid dissolves away
> In dreams all night, in sighs and tears all day. (ll. 61-70)

This neatly states the objectives of the Wits' love verses, but they were not in vogue all that long. Rochester rejected their values, and so did Oldham, who, after his own brief flirtation with libertinism, in Satire upon a Printer contemptuously denounced the tactics of:

> Some small Adventurer in Song, that whines
> Chloris and Phyllis out, in charming Lines,
> Fit to divert mine Hostess, and mislead
> The Heart of some poor taudry Waiting-Maid. (I, p. 248)

In a good many cases these "persuasions to enjoy" did actually succeed. But if they did not, vituperation was a last resort. Rochester expressed his misogyny with increasing frequency, and Oldham's admiration for him may have influenced him in the same direction, though it is salutary to remember that a poem such as A Satire upon a Woman has classical ancestors.* Dorset's satires On the Countess of Dorchester are comparatively subtle examples of such lampoons.[15] On at least one occasion even this technique met with success, whether the effect was expected or not. If

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*See below, Chapter V, pp. 273-6.

Captain Alexander Smith can be believed,[16] Mrs. Sarah Raymond was won over by the insults directed against her in Dorset's Song:

> Phillis, the fairest of love's foes,
> Though fiercer than a dragon,
> Phillis, that scorn'd the powder'd beaus,
> What has she now to brag on ?
> So long she kept her legs so close,
> Till they had scarce a rag on.
>
> Compell'd thro' want, this wretched maid
> Did sad complaints begin;
> Which surly Strephon hearing, said,
> It was both shame and sin,
> To pity such a lazy jade,
> As will neither play nor spin.[17]

As critics, the Wits did not suffer fools gladly, and many of the professional poets were the victims of their verses. Not for nothing does Rochester single out Buckhurst as the most effective exponent of "pointed satyrs" in his idiosyncratic contribution to the literary controversy of the period, An Allusion to Horace. But characteristically, he qualifies this in the next line with a compliment to the temperament of "The best good man with the worst-natured muse". (l. 60) This is not favouritism on Rochester's part. His judgment also finds expression in Pope's Epitaph of Dorset:

> Dorset, the Grace of Courts, the Muses Pride,
> Patron of Arts, and Judge of Nature, dy'd !
> The Scourge of Pride, tho' sanctify'd or great,
> Of Fops in Learning, and of Knaves in State:
> Yet soft his Nature, tho' severe his Lay,
> His Anger moral, and his Wisdom gay.
> Blest Satyrist ! who touch'd the Mean so true,
> As show'd, Vice had his Hate and Pity too.
> Blest Courtier ! who could King and Country please,
> Yet sacred keep his Friendships, and his Ease.
> Blest Peer ! his great Forefathers ev'ry Grace
> Reflecting, and reflected in his Race;
> Where other Buckhursts, other Dorsets shine,
> And Patriots still, or Poets, deck the Line. (Twickenham, ed., VI, pp. 334-5)

The phrase "Patron of Arts" does scant justice to Dorset's generosity. Many impecunious authors had good cause to be grateful for his bounty, and his title the Maecenas of Charles II's Court became a commonplace.* Many of the other Wits were generous patrons too, a fact which is substantiated by numerous complimentary dedications, as well as imitations by the professionals of formulae which the Wits had proved successful. Among the more important poets whom Dorset helped were Dryden, Oldham and Prior, while even Milton was "discovered" by him.[18]

One poet, however, remained notably independent, and his poverty in his last years became a byword for the ingratitude of the public, and patrons in particular.+ Yet perhaps it was his independence, as well as his unique qualifications as a satirist, which enabled Samuel Butler to produce "A Duke of Bucks", a portrait which is worthy of its place alongside Dryden's "Zimri" and Pope's "Great Villers" in the legends surrounding the life of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham:

> His appetite to his pleasure is diseased and crazy like the pica in a woman that longs to eat that which was never made for food, or a girl in the greensickness that eats chalk and mortar. Perpetual surfeits of pleasure have filled his mind with bad and vicious humours (as well as his body with a nursery of diseases), which makes him affect new and extravagant ways, as being sick and tired with the old. Continual wine, women, and music put false values upon things, which by custom become habitual and debauch his understanding so, that he retains no right notion nor sense of things; and as the same dose of the same physic has no operation on those that are much used to it, so his pleasures require a larger proportion of excess and variety to render him sensible of them.[19]

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*See, for example, H. Denne, To the ... Earl of Dorset ... on his Advancement to the Dignity of the Garter, in The Gentleman's Journal (June 1692), p. 22; or John Oldmixon, The Life and Posthumous Works of Arthur Maynwaring (1715), pp. 14-15.

+See, for example, Oldham's lines on him, beginning:

> On Butler who can think without just Rage,
> The Glory, and the Scandal of the Age ? (II, p. 155).

Cf. also Dryden, The Hind and the Panther, III, ll. 247-50: "Unpitty'd Hudibrass, ...".

The Litany of the Duke of Buckingham (1680)[20] offers a much less good-humoured particularisation of the general statement with which Butler's Character begins: "A Duke of Bucks is one who has studied the whole body of vice". Also hostile, although still fairly general, are the lines in Rochester's Farewell beginning:

> But when degrees of villainy we name,
> How can we choose but think of Buckingham ?
> He who through all of 'em has boldly ran,
> Left ne'er a law unbroke of God or man.[21]

The growth in Buckingham's unpopularity can largely be explained by his implication in various political storms during the 1670's. Dryden, in his portrait of Zimri, utilised the stereotype which the lampoons had helped to create, just as the opening lines of Absalom and Achitophel are a similar concession to the view of Charles expressed with increasing frequency in such lampoons since the Third Dutch War. The legends were naturally more spectacular than the facts. Buckingham, for example, repented his sins, and received the Sacrament before he died. But in this respect, none of the Wits outshone Rochester, who was already a legend by the time of his premature death at the age of thirty-three.

2 Rochester: the paradigm case

Two of the most eminent commentators on Rochester's life and writings agree that he is completely representative of the period in which he lived. "No man was ever more typical of his age than John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester" writes David Vieth,[22] who accepts the legendary view of Rochester as "the darling of the polished, profligate Court of Charles II" as true, if simplified.

To Vieth, as to Underwood, Etherege's Dorimant epitomises the same fashionable Restoration society as his model, Rochester - one on the stage, the other in real life. Vivian de Sola Pinto describes Rochester's as the representative mind of the English aristocracy under Charles II, as Sir Philip Sidney's was under Elizabeth I.[23] It is significant that both his mind and his actions are considered to be representative. Pinto sees his contribution in the sphere of action as making the experiment, in an age of experiment, of living the complete life of pleasure, according to Hobbes' definition, while his contemporaries Bunyan and Fox led the saintly life. (p. 29) As regards Rochester's thought, he has said: "If Milton is the great poet of belief in the seventeenth century, Rochester is the great poet of unbelief." (p. 114) These two remarks are a resounding summary of Rochester's importance, though both are oversimplifications.

Rochester is the archetypal Restoration libertine. More than any other single figure his life and work embody all three of the strands which Underwood identified in libertinism: Epicureanism, naturalism, and scepticism. In addition, he is, unlike many rakes, a poet of acknowledged skill. Not only is he important in literary history as a precursor of the Augustan satirists, particularly in his choice of genres and his use of <u>personae</u>, but his most successful lyrics and satires achieve a universality which justifies their inclusion, on their own merit, amongst the best in the language. The biographical details implied in many of them also constantly remind us of his remarkable life, so that in Rochester life and works bear a closer relationship to each other than in almost any other writer.

The story of Rochester's life has been told often, in many different ways, from fictional to scholarly. The fullest account is Pinto's Enthusiast in Wit. Unlike some of the others, it gives Rochester credit for an essential seriousness of mind. Indeed, Pinto sometimes leans over too far backwards in this direction, as when he applies hindsight to a discussion of the poem Love and Life to argue: "He was bound to turn to religion as soon as he was convinced that it was spiritual experience and not merely a set of antiquated inhibitions." (p. 59) Nevertheless, his description of Rochester's last illness and the conversion itself (however "inevitable") is singularly moving.

Even more useful in counteracting the notion that Rochester was nothing more than the gay rake is Vieth's Yale edition of The Complete Poems. After giving in his introduction a brief outline of the Restoration temper, he says that within this context "Rochester's special emphasis is his striving for immediacy of experience." (p. xxxiv) Having warned the reader against identifying the Restoration temper with the superficially similar stances of various modern eras, he continues:

> Rochester's demand for immediacy of experience obviously includes sensual gratification, but it is not limited to appetites which could be satiated by a night in a tavern or stews. Despite the "dissociation of sensibility" that is said to have taken place in the late seventeenth century, experience could still derive almost as directly from an abstract idea, a code of conduct (e.g. morality, honor), a tradition, a literary convention (like formal satire), an emotion, or a belief (for instance, that Christ is one's Savior). (pp. xxxiv-v)

He goes on to demonstrate how Rochester's distinctive poetic technique, involving the manipulation of several different levels of experience at the same time, results in his characteristic irony.

One is aware of his affinities with Donne in the handling of his experience of both sensuality and belief, as well as the debt to him of literary heirs such as Pope and Swift in the complex question of identity involved in the author's relationship to his work. While one must be wary of identifying the persona completely with Rochester, there is a sense in which "To a greater or lesser degree the 'I' of each poem is always Rochester, even when the speaker is a woman." (Vieth, p. xli) By its arrangement of the poems where possible in chronological order, Vieth's edition enables us to see, often for the first time, the influence of particular biographical events on the poems, which he is able to assign to one of four main groups, corresponding to phases in Rochester's life. My own critical comments remain brief, because a recent book has made good use of Vieth's edition to provide us with an evaluation of Rochester's poems which is in most respects very sound. [24]

Rochester was born at Ditchley, Oxfordshire, on 1 April 1647. His mother came from a prominent Puritan family and seems to have been "a sober, strongminded, shrewd woman". That she should have married the royalist general Henry Wilmot, Baron Wilmot of Adderbury in Oxfordshire, is surprising at this time of Civil War. Having served Charles I faithfully, he was often abroad in the service of Prince Charles after 1650, and it was in reward for his services that he was created Earl of Rochester in 1652. He died on 19 February 1658, and his son saw him rarely, if ever.

The young Earl was brought up by his mother. He was tutored at home by her chaplain, Francis Giffard, and then sent to Burford

Grammar School, a pietist establishment where he was subjected to the long hours and rigorous studies which were the lot of the seventeenth century schoolboy. Rochester's debauchery, as is often the case with libertine behaviour, was probably a reaction against his strict upbringing. At school he is reported to have been "an extraordinary Proficient at his book",[25] gaining a thorough knowledge of Latin and other subjects which would stand him in good stead. On 18 January 1660 he matriculated as a fellow commoner at Wadham College, Oxford, which was by now the moving force behind the Royal Society.

Rochester's tutor at Oxford was Robert Whitehall, a buffoonish, Falstaffian figure, who initiated him into a career of debauchery, which soon affected the young Earl's health, already impaired by his long hours of study at Burford. One can imagine the effect that the free atmosphere of Oxford, particularly following the Restoration celebrations, must have had on the fourteen year old Rochester, after the austerity of his regimen at home and at school. But it was Whitehall too who fostered the boy's interest in poetry, and probably helped him with his earliest poems, some lines on Charles II's return, and two poems on the death of the Princess of Orange. The Earl of Clarendon conferred the degree of M.A. on Rochester on 9 September 1661.

The King granted him a pension of £500 in gratitude for his father's services, and, his formal education over, sent him on the Grand Tour, under the guidance of "the Learned and Judicious" Sir

Andrew Balfour, a distinguished scholar and wit. They travelled together through France and Italy for four years, and during this time Balfour imbued his charge with a "delight in Books and reading". The tour included a visit to the famous painter and poet Salvator Rosa, whom Pinto suggests may have given Rochester the idea for his satiric poem On Nothing. On 26 October 1664 Rochester enrolled at the University of Padua, which was traditionally the home of Italian naturalist philosophy, and which always included a large number of British students. The students' riotous behaviour at this time is recorded by Balfour.[26]

Rochester returned at the end of that year to an England very different from the puritanical one of his boyhood. When he appeared at Court on Christmas Day 1664, it was to find already established there wits such as Buckingham, Buckhurst, Sedley and Etherege. His own wit's "subtility and sublimity both, that were scarce imitable" is attested to by Burnet,[27] and this, together with his graceful manner and appearance, made him "very Acceptable in a Court" - the epitome of the newly fashionable "modern fine gentleman" or "brilliant wild gallant".

His ensuing series of wild exploits culminated in the abduction, on 26 May 1665, of Elizabeth Malet (whom Pepys describes as "the great beauty and fortune of the North",[28] from under the nose of her grandfather Lord Hawley, and in the face of many aristocratic suitors, any of whom her family would have preferred to Rochester, a man of little apparent substance and few prospects. After some weeks' imprisonment in the Tower, Rochester was pardoned by the King,

and made amends by volunteering for the Second Dutch War, in which he distinguished himself by his bravery. The romance also had a happy ending: Miss Malet finally defied her family and married Rochester, whom she had apparently preferred all along, on 29 January 1667. For some reason which still remains mysterious he instigated her conversion to Catholicism at this time, and she remained a Catholic until shortly before his death in 1680.

An incident which occurred during the war attests to the essentially serious nature of Rochester's mind, and to his readiness to engage in empirical experiment. The war situation gave rise to a period of questioning about the nature of death, the soul and the body, and to doubts about whether Hobbes and Lucretius were right that the world was nothing more than an assemblage of atoms thrown together by chance. Accordingly, he made an agreement with his friend Windham, that whichever of them died first would appear to the other after death, thereby settling the question of the existence of life hereafter. The failure of Windham to reappear, and also the strong presentiment which his other friend Montagu had expressed before both were killed by the same cannonball, seemed to show that spirit was distinct from body, a discovery which shook Rochester's materialism.[29]

On 14 March 1667 Rochester began his duties as Gentleman of the Bedchamber to the King, joining Buckingham and Buckhurst. One of his various escapades from this period is reported by Pepys, who on 2 December 1668 heard:

> the silly discourse of the King, with his people about him, telling a story of my Lord Rochester's having of his clothes stole, while he was with a wench; and his gold all gone, but his clothes found afterwards stuffed into a feather bed by the wench that stole them.[30]

By the time Pepys wrote this, the Ballers were in existence; he had described this group, to which Rochester, Sedley, Savile and Newport belonged, as a set of fast young blades at Court, who met on the premises of the procuress "my Lady" Bennett,* and who used to dance naked with Mrs. Bennett's "ladies" and "all the roguish things in the world".[31] Henry Savile, in a letter to Rochester dated 26 January 1671, refers to the episode of the Ballers versus the Farmers.[32] The latter were the customs officers who had seized and burned a box of dildoes, an incident which is commemorated in Rochester's Signior Dildo. It is even more elaborately immortalised in the mock-heroic poem Dildoides (1672), attributed to Samuel Butler, which reports the debate that took place "When Council grave of deepest Beard/Was call'd from out the City Herd" to decide the dildoes' fate.[33] "One less Fanatic than the rest" argues that they might indeed be harmful, but then so might anything: "Religion's self has ruined Nations", yet no-one advocates suppressing a thing just because fools can abuse it. This moderate is succeeded by a "Cit", who argues that the dildoes should be preserved, but he is discredited in the eyes of the reader because his considerations are purely financial. The whole assembly is won over by the argument of one "With limber Pr--k & Grisly Chin" that dildoes save their womens' honour, since they make it unnecessary to have recourse to footmen.

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* "Lady" Bennett occasioned Buckhurst's Duel of the Crabs, sometimes known as A Duel between two Monsters upon my Lady Bennett's C--t, an obscene poem in imitation of Sir Robert Howard's Duel of the Stags (1668).

But "th' unstable Vulgar's Mind" is finally turned by the cit who asks: "how shall I e're make her pity me,/Who enjoys Man in this Epitome ?" - and calls for the destruction of the dildoes on the grounds that they are an insult to the "Sacred Rites of Propagation". His apology to the ladies is designed to expose the hypocrisy of this course of action:

> ... take it not for Rudeness;
> For never was so base a Treachery,
> Design'd by Men 'gainst Female Lechery,
> Men wou'd kind husbands seem, & able,
> With feign'd Lust, & borrowed Bauble,
> Lovers themselves wou'd rest their passion,
> In this Fantastick new French Fashion:
> But the wise City will take care,
> That Men shall vend no such false ware. (f 10^{v})

During the summer and autumn of 1670 Rochester was in service in London, where "grave, pious" John Evelyn, having met him at dinner with the Lord Treasurer on 24 November, called him "a very prophane Wit".[34] He tried hard at this time to settle into the quiet routine of the country landowner. There is a distinct impression of two Rochesters: the wild poet and rake of Whitehall and Covent Garden, and the respectable country gentleman in Oxfordshire. According to John Aubrey: "He was wont to say that when he came to Brentford the devill entred into him and never left him till he came into the country again to Adderbury or Woodstock".[35] His reluctance to leave the country is confirmed in some of his letters to Savile, a friend in whom he confided much. His domestic situation was evidently happy, and his marriage produced four children. Yet the element of restlessness which is so marked in the letters to Savile is detectable also in this fragment of a letter to his wife:

> ... soe greate a disproportion t'wixt our desires and what is ordained to content them; but you will say this is pride and madness, for there are those soe intirely satisfied with theire shares in this world, that theire wishes nor theire thoughts have not a farther prospect of felicity and glory. I'le tell you were that mans soule plac't in a body fitt for it, hee were dogg, that could count anything a benefit obtain'd with flattery, feare, and service.[36]

For such an essentially serious mind, neither hedonism nor a life of domestic ease nor Epicurean retirement in the country could be anything more than a temporary palliative.

Rochester was frequently banished from Court, but rarely for long. One incident which forced him to flee the Court occurred in early January 1674, when, intending to give King Charles a lampoon on some ladies, he handed him by mistake an obscene satire on the King himself. (Vieth, p. 60)[37] Charles soon forgave him, since on 27 February Rochester was appointed Ranger and on 2 May Keeper of Woodstock Park. This entitled him to live in the fine old High Lodge, which was the scene of many a gathering of the Wits, including a spectacular one with Buckingham, Dorset and others, in October and November 1677, from which several satiric pieces resulted.

It is not known whether Rochester was exiled from Court for the affair of the King's sundial,* which occurred at Whitehall on 25 June 1675. Perhaps it was on this occasion, or during a subsequent period of disgrace in 1675 or 1676 that he masqueraded as the quack doctor Alexander Bendo. This was probably the most elaborate of Rochester's exploits, involving extended use of disguise, and the

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*Described below, Chapter V, p. 255.

issuing of a mock mountebank bill.[38] Pinto praises the latter for the clarity of its new Restoration prose, its energy, wit and subtly varied rhythm, calling it a masterpiece of ironical satire written with a sureness of touch and a perfection of poise worthy of the Swift of the Argument Against Abolishing Christianity and A Modest Proposal. (p. 88)

A similar irony is observable even in Rochester's earliest work. In A Dialogue between Strephon and Daphne, Strephon's libertine argument is illustrated by means of an elaborate sexual metaphor:

> Love, like us, must fate obey,
> Since 'tis nature's law to change,
> Constancy alone is strange.
> See the heavens in lightnings break,
> Next in storms of thunder speak,
> Till a kind rain from above
> Makes a calm---so 'tis in love.
> Flames begin our first address;
> Like meeting thunder we embrace;
> Then, you know, the showers that fall
> Quench the fire, and quiet all.

Daphne extends the metaphor in her reply:

> How should I these showers forget ?
> 'Twas so pleasant to be wet !
> They killed love, I knew it well:
> I died all the while they fell. (p. 8)

In his rejection of her Strephon urges her to pursue the same course as himself:

> Change has greater charms than you.
> Be by my example wise:
> Faith to pleasure sacrifice. (p. 9)

But Daphne has the last laugh:

> Silly swain, I'll have you know
> 'Twas my practise long ago.
> Whilst you vainly thought me true,
> I was false in scorn of you.

By my tears, my heart's disguise,
I thy love and thee despise.
Womankind more joy discovers
Making fools than keeping lovers. (p. 9)

The ironic twist at the end transforms what would otherwise be somewhat conventional verse into witty mock pastoral. Another poem which uses the extended sexual metaphor is The Platonic Lady, one of Rochester's many imitations, in which there is an ironic discrepancy between the title and the subject. Many of the Songs are simply more explicit statements of the hedonism of the carpe diem tradition, though in some cases a line or two will rise to the proverbial or the prophetic:

Phyllis, be gentler, I advise;
Make up for time misspent:
When beauty on its deathbed lies,
'Tis high time to repent. (p. 32)

His best lyrics are among the finest in the language. Of the early Song ("As Chloris full of harmless thought") Pinto has said that it is "halfway between Herrick and Carew and Prior and Gay," that it combines the imaginative power of the earlier poets with the perspicuity and grace of the Augustans (p. 50).

One of Rochester's most straightforwardly hedonistic poems is Upon His Drinking a Bowl, which ends:

Cupid and Bacchus my saints are:
May drink and love still reign.
With wine I wash away my cares,
And then to cunt again. (p. 53)

Vieth notes that about 1673, when this poem was written, Rochester was experimenting with the use of obscenity as a means of inducing immediacy of experience more fully than at any other time in his

career (p. xxxviii). This is clearly seen in The Imperfect Enjoyment, a poem belonging to the same period, which is as explicit an account of the sex act as anything Rochester ever wrote. The source of this genre, like that of its cousin the "Enjoyment" poem,* is in French, and other Restoration examples include the anonymous Fruition was the question in debate, Aphra Behn's The Disappointment+ ("One day the amorous Lysander"), and Etherege's The Imperfect Enjoyment ("After a pretty amorous discourse"). Though this type of poem originates from Ovid's Amores III vii and Petronius's Satyricon, chapters 128-40, in its later manifestations it became less and less of a neoclassical imitation, "more and more the occasion for dramatizing a recognizably 'modern', libertine attitude, one distrusting the interference of rational or imaginative faculties in a situation properly physical only, an attitude traceable to Montaigne's Essais, I. xxi".[39] Rochester's poem also contains incidental self-satire, of the very rakehell which he himself was accused of being:

> Like a rude, roaring hector in the streets
> Who scuffles, cuffs, and justles all he meets,
> But if his King or country claim his aid,
> The rakehell villain shrinks and shakes his head. (p. 39)

Rochester grew more interested in this device of self-satire as his disillusion with libertinism grew.

This disillusion becomes very apparent, and with it the device of self-satire, in a group of three poems written between 1672 and 1674, all of which use a libertine spokesman who approximates to

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*See above, Chapter III, p.166.

+In Familiar Letters of Love (1718).

the real-life Rochester. A Ramble in St. James's Park, written by 20 March 1673, presents a bitter denunciation of the mindless debauchery engaged in in that milieu. After describing the sordid pick-up in detail, the libertine "honest man" draws a distinction between permissible lust (passion) and artificially engendered appetite. He would not mind, he says, if Corinna were merely satisfying her desires (which perhaps he had raised) with "Some stiff-pricked clown or well-hung parson", because:

> Such natural freedoms are but just:
> There's something generous in mere lust.
> But to turn damned abandoned jade
> When neither head nor tail persuade;
> To be a whore in understanding,
> A passive pot for fools to spend in ! (p. 43)

Not only is the sex mechanical and passionless, but it is indulged in with fools ! In this poem Rochester's libertine measures the decadent world of Corinna and others who engage in unnatural, unfeeling sex, against the more passionate and therefore preferable "generous lust". The poem parodies Waller's panegyric On St. James's Park, as lately Improved by his Majesty (1661), and also the Cavalier love-song convention of the disdainful mistress walking in a garden, to suggest that the pastoral and Cavalier modes no longer fit the debased realities of current social and sexual behaviour.

The mood of disillusion continues with Timon and Tunbridge Wells. The latter concludes with an outburst of misanthropy that anticipates his Satyr against Mankind, Pope's Essay on Man and the Swift of Gulliver's Travels:

> Bless me ! thought I, what thing is man that thus
> In all his shapes, he is ridiculous ?
> Ourselves with noise of reason we do please
> In vain: humanity's our worst disease.

Thrice happy beasts are, who, because they be
Of reason void, are so of foppery.
Faith, I was so ashamed that with remorse
I used the insolence to mount my horse,
For he, doing only things fit for his nature,
Did seem to me by much the wiser creature. (ll. 166-75, p. 80)

The disparaging comparison of man with the beasts had been a favourite method whereby satirists and poets, particularly in seventeenth century France, had sought to lower man's self-esteem. The main significance of the device in Tunbridge Wells is that it forms a link between these three early satires and the Satyr against Mankind. In Tunbridge Wells the libertine speaker includes himself in the invidious comparison with the "Bear Garden ape, on his steed mounted", which is made explicit in the concluding lines of the poem. We can at least give him credit for realising the similarity, which is the main quality that sets him apart from the assorted fools at the Wells. The same assumption is behind the famous portrait of Rochester crowning the monkey, which involves the viewer's realisation that he too is thereby being satirised. In the Satyr Rochester similarly leaves the reader no possibility of escape from making the identification. The major difference is that in the Satyr against Mankind Rochester's self-satire is given the generalisation which great poetry demands, and so he achieves in it a universality which is never quite realised in the earlier poems which employ the libertine spokesman.

Although A Satyr against Mankind has been much analysed, this passage has been overlooked by all but one commentator:[40]

And wit was his vain, frivolous pretense
Of pleasing others at his own expense,
For wits are treated just like common whores:
First they're enjoyed, and then kicked out of doors.

> The pleasure past, a threatening doubt remains
> That frights th'enjoyer with succeeding pains.
> Women and men of wit are dangerous tools,
> And ever fatal to admiring fools:
> Pleasure allures, and when the fops escape,
> 'Tis not that they're belov'd, but fortunate,
> And therefore what they fear at heart, they hate.
> (ll. 35-45, pp. 95-6)

The main speaker's adversary, the "formal band and beard", approves of this attack "On wit, which I abhor with all my heart", regretting only its lack of severity, and his claim that "perhaps my muse were fitter for this part" neatly demonstrates that pride which is the principal object of Rochester's satire. However, the adversarius sees the attack on wit as a side issue compared with the main speaker's "grand indiscretion" in attacking reason and mankind. His attempted rejoinder to this is an even more obvious proof of the accuracy of the first speaker's allegations concerning the philosopher's pride. Yet although the attack on wit here is directed primarily against pride in wit, it nevertheless implies a change in Rochester's own attitude to wit. We are entitled to read it as, in part at least, a statement of his own position on the subject. In earlier poems he had written that "wit has to pleasure been ever a friend" (p. 15), and "Wit's business is to please" (p. 49). The attack on it in the Satyr suggests how far Rochester had moved in the intervening two years towards a rejection of that essential component of libertinism.

In the same way this passage from the last section of the poem, though it is primarily directed against hypocrisy, at the same time amounts to a rejection of sensuality itself. Worse than the man of wit is the churchman, whose "vain prelatic pride" leads him:

To chide at kings, and rail at men of sense;
None of that sensual tribe whose talents lie
In avarice, pride, sloth and gluttony;
Who hunt good livings, but abhor good lives;
Whose lust exalted to that height arrives
They act adultery with their own wives,
And ere a score of years completed be,
Can from the lofty pulpit proudly see
Half a large parish their own progeny;
Nor doting bishop who would be adored
For domineering at the council board,
A greater fop in business at fourscore,
Fonder of serious toys, affected more,
Than the gay, glittering fool at twenty proves
With all his noise, his tawdry clothes, and loves.
(ll. 197-211, p. 101)

The poem then ends with a few lines praising humility, an orthodox Christian message, but one which the Christian clergymen in the poem have ignored. This is not altogether paradoxical, since: "The final admonition to be humble is the logical conclusion of an unorthodox view of man* that runs through the poem alongside the denunciation of pride".[41]

S.F. Crocker, in an extensive search for the sources of the antirationalistic and naturalistic elements in the poem, turns up an impressive series of verbal parallels with a number of French works. By far the majority of these involve Montaigne's Apologie de Raymond Sebond, which "reveals an anti-rationalistic philosophy even more completely conceived than La Rochefoucauld's Maximes", some of which are also echoed in the Satyr. The parallels are not sufficient to establish a source, but Crocker concludes: "There is scarcely an idea of major or minor importance in Rochester that is not present in Montaigne."[42] In addition to Boileau, Crocker finds similarities with the libertin poets Théophile de Viau, Des

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*One might call it, broadly, humanist as opposed to Christian. As Bayle demonstrated, "atheists" were not necessarily wicked: even libertines could have an acceptable system of ethics.

Barreaux, Claude le Petit and Claude de Chouvigny. But this study is inconclusive. As Main points out, Montaigne and Rochester have very different purposes in attacking reason. Whereas Montaigne and sceptics like him question man's ability to reason in order to stress his need to have faith in divine revelation, Rochester's speaker sets up reason and sense as opposites, and prefers sense, which he calls the "light of nature". (l. 13, p. 95). The orthodox position here may be taken to be that of the Cambridge Platonists. Whichcote had called reason "the candle of the Lord",[43] and John Smith had declared that to follow it was to follow God. Rochester's libertine, parodying also the Puritan's "inner light",* portrays reason as a false light, "an ignis fatuus". This extreme statement, made at the beginning of the poem, is designed to shock the orthodox, and is somewhat modified later. The opening lines of Dryden's Religio Laici may serve as a fitting comparison by which to establish the "normal" view of the role of reason.

The standard against which the speaker measures man, and finds him wanting, is supplied by the beasts. Unlike humans, animals are not motivated primarily by fear, nor does reason interfere with the exercise of their appetites. They are therefore wiser than man, since they "attain/By surest means, the ends at which they aim". (l. 119). The source for these theriophilic ideas is Hobbes, who describes the harmony in which animals lived, free from strife, in the absence of quarrels over precedence, honour, or the acknowledgment

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*Etherege says: "I have ever enjoyed a liberty of opinion in matters of religion, 'tis indifferent to me whether there be any other in the world who thinks as I do; this makes me have no temptation to talk of the business, but quietly following the light within me I leave that to them who were born with the ambition of becoming prophets or legislators." He goes on to attack the clergy's hypocrisy. (Letterbook, p. 305).

of each other's wisdom.[44] His emphasis on man's fear has already been observed.* The implication of such ideas in the Satyr is that animals are better than men because they lack pride and fear, the motives for most of the undesirable traits in human behaviour. The speaker argues from a naturalistic basis, and overlooks the Fall and the Christian explanation of man's fear as being due to guilt. Thus Thomas Lessee, in "A Satyre, in answer to my Ld Rochester's", attempts to counter the Hobbist conclusion that "all men would be cowards if they durst" by attacking Hobbes, and then substituting an orthodox explanation, which ends: "For all men would be valiant, if they durst."[45] Similarly, in his attack on intellectual pride at the beginning of the poem, Rochester's speaker overlooks sin, as Richard Pocock was quick to point out in An Answer to the Satyr against Mankind. Main comments:

> The Christian view always leaves man with more than a few rags of pride. Rochester's satirist, in contrast, strips from man even the dignity of having fallen from grace. By indicting the race for stupidity rather than for sinfulness, he commits an outrage against conventional morality.[46]

The poem's force is in large measure derived from the skilfully worked interplay between this attack on man's pride, and the setting up of the beasts as the standard beside which man is found wanting.

The Fall contrasts the happy state of man and woman before the Fall, when "Naked beneath cool shades they lay;/Enjoyment waited on desire" with their incapability of finding complete pleasure in

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*See above, Chapter II, pp. 124-7.

the life of the senses now, as a consequence of the introduction not of sin, but of Hobbist "law":

> But we, poor slaves to hope and fear,
> Are never of our joys secure;
> They lessen still as they draw near,
> And none but dull delights endure. (p. 86)

These sentiments of disillusion are most poignantly expressed in another lyric, Love and Life, which is worth quoting in full:

> All my past life is mine no more;
> The flying hours are gone,
> Like transitory dreams given o'er
> Whose images are kept in store
> By memory alone.
>
> Whatever is to come is not:
> How can it then be mine ?
> The present moment's all my lot,
> And that, as fast as it is got,
> Phyllis, is wholly thine.
>
> Then talk not of inconstancy,
> False hearts, and broken vows;
> If I, by miracle, can be
> This livelong minute true to thee,
> 'Tis all that heaven allows. (p. 90)

In this poem, with its echo of Donne's Song ("Go and catch a falling star"), it is as if Rochester is rather desperately trying to convince himself of the need to live for the moment, because of, or in spite of, the nihilistic implications of the Epicurean philosophy. Pinto is right in saying that the poem's beauty is mainly due to the poet's awareness that the "flying hours" are full of sadness, and the hedonistic philosophy only a dream: the joyous present cannot be isolated, but melts into the past and fades into the future. He is probably accurate too in observing that it expresses the Epicurean ideal of a life lived for momentary pleasure, not from the point of view of a greedy sensualist, but from that of a:

> spiritual explorer who wants to escape from time and find an experience that will transcend all ordinary experiences ... The poet of Love and Life is hungry for the freedom from the tyranny of time and space that the pleasures of the senses could only give him for a fleeting instant. (p. 59)

It must be admitted that this reading of the poem could probably not be made without adducing a knowledge of Rochester's later life. As such, it is an example of Pinto's tendency to make Rochester's poems consistent with his view of Rochester's career as an experiment in living the life of pleasure. Nevertheless, his argument that the author of Love and Life is the Rochester for whom conversion was a natural step is both attractive and convincing.

Many of the familiar libertine statements occur in Rochester's adaptation of Fletcher's Valentinian, in which he satirises Charles II and libertinism itself, as well as the heroic mode. Valentinian, motivated by the same destructive urge as Nero (another "heroic" character embodying elements of satire on Charles), finds Lucina's virtue irresistible. He tells her:

> Your beauty had subdu'd my Heart before,
> Such Virtue could alone enslave me more; [47]

and he is glad when his bawds fail to bend her to his will, for that would have stolen from him the pleasure of robbing her of her chastity. He tells them:

> Before my Dazzled Eyes cou'd you now place
> A thousand willing Beauties to allure
> And give me Lust for every loose Embrace,
> My love Lucina's Virtue would secure,
> From the contagious Charm in vain I fly,
> 'T has seiz'd upon my Heart, and may defie
> That great Preservative Variety ! } (p. 9)

He goes on to call "Virtue an ill-bred Crosseness in the Will ... Honour a Notion ! Piety a Cheat !" (p. 9) If this view of Honour resembles Falstaff's, his speech just before he rapes Lucina

echoes Hotspur on honour:

> I'le plunge into a Sea of my Desires,
> And quench my Fever, tho' I drown my Fame,
> And tear up Pleasure by the Roots: No matter
> Tho' it never grow again; what shall ensue,
> Let Gods and Fate look to it; 'tis their Business.
> (IV ii, p. 46)

Besides parodying the heroic notion of honour, this speech also expresses the self-defeating nature of hedonism, the libertine's perpetual dilemma.

When voicing his decision to rape Lucina, Valentinian elaborates on Hobbes and Montaigne in drawing a distinction between different species of beasts which it is desirable to follow:

> 'Tis nobler like a Lion to invade,
> Where Appetite directs, and seize my Prey,
> Than to wait tamely like a begging Dog,
> Till dull Consent throws out the Scraps of Love. (p. 46)

Butler, it may be noted, uses similar arguments <u>against</u> inconstancy, in <u>Honor</u>. The nobler wild animals, he claims, such as lions and elephants, are constant to their mate:

> But Paltry Rams, and Bulles, and Goats, and Boars
> Are never satisfy'd with new Amores,
> As all Pultrons with us delight to Range,
> And tho but for the worst of all, to change.[48]

Valentinian, like Nero and Don John, is a total iconoclast, defying the Gods and relishing force:

> I scorn those Gods* who seek to cross my Wishes,
> And will in spite of 'em be happy: Force
> Of all the Powers is the most generous;
> For what it gives, it freely does bestow,
> Without the after-bribe of Gratitude. (p. 46)

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* More extreme, as always, Bolloxinion, King of Sodom, wants to bugger the Gods - see above Chapter II, p.114.

After the rape he justifies himself by necessitarian arguments:

> If I have done a Sin, curse her that drew me;
> Curse the first Cause, the Witchcraft that abus'd me;
> Curse your fair Eyes, and curse that heav'nly Beauty,
> And curse your being good too. (p. 49)

More of this "moralising" rant, a reductio ad absurdum of the libertine's use of determinism, follows, and is defied by Lucina, who soon resolves on suicide. Valentinian also remains defiant, and dies unrepentant, like other libertine "tragic heroes".

The debate between libertinism and virtue or honour is engaged in at a lower level in the play between Lucina's two maids, Marcellina, a devotee of pleasure, and the chaste Claudia, who describes herself thus:

> I think I may be well stil'd Honours Martyr.
> With firmest Constancy I have endur'd
> The raging Heats of passionate Desires !
> While flaming love and boyling Nature both
> Were pour'd upon my Soul with equal Torture:
> I arm'd with Resolution stood it out
> And kept my Honour safe. (III iii, p. 30)

Clearly the pleasures of virtue are entirely masochistic. Marcellina has no such problems;

> But, Claudia, Thanks to Heav'n that I am made
> The weakest of all women: fram'd so frail
> That Honour ne'er thought fit to chuse me out,
> His Champion against Pleasure: ...
> Pity a wretch, who has no Charm at all,
> Against th' impetuous Tide of flowing Pleasure,
> Who wants both Force and Courage to maintain
> The glorious War made upon Flesh and Blood,
> But it is a Sacrifice to every wish
> And has no power left to resist a Joy.

Claudia is envious, evidently with cause:

> With what Tranquillity and Peace thou liv'st !
> For stript of Shame; Thou hast no cause to fear;
> While I the Slave of Virtue am afraid
> Of every thing I see: And think the World

A dreadful wilderness of savage Beasts;
Each man I meet I fancy will devour me;
And sway'd by Rules not natural but affected
I hate Mankind for fear of being lov'd. (pp. 30-1)

Whether Claudia's fear derives from Hobbes or from the orthodox feeling of guilt is unimportant. It exposes her virtue as a sham, her behaviour, prompted by it, as unnatural, and the laws which uphold it as artificially imposed. She wants to be governed by the "natural" rules rather than the "affected" ones, but she does not have the courage. Shadwell's Don John had used a similar argument to justify his behaviour, with the difference that he had the strength to put it into practice. Sade's Juliette would be "amply rewarded" for pursuing vice, in contrast to Justine's dire experiences consequent upon embracing virtue.

Having discredited the hypocritical motives for female "honour", Rochester turns his attentions to the libertine position. Marcellina, using the language of orthodox attacks on superstition and heresy, attempts to show Claudia that:

'Tis nothing less than Witchcraft can constrain
Still to persist in Errors we perceive ! (p. 31)

She urges her chaste companion, with the familiar libertine arguments, to "reform" her pious ways, an inversion of the usual libertine repentance:

Prithee reform; what Nature prompts us to,
And Reason seconds, why should we avoid ?
This Honour is the veriest Mountebank,
It fits our Fancies with affected Tricks
And makes us freakish; what a Cheat must that be
Which robs our lives of all their softer hours,
Beauty, our only Treasure it lays waste.
Hurries us over our neglected Youth,
To the detested state of Age and Ugliness,
Tearing our dearest Hearts Desires from us.
Then in reward of what it took away
Our Joys, our Hopes, our Wishes and Delights
It bountifully pays us all with Pride !

Apart from the obvious satirical exaggeration of the first two lines, the actual effects attributed to honour in this speech convey an experience of the ravages of debauchery similar to that of Rochester's lyrics. Though honour is nominally blamed, the underlying sadness is due to the poet's awareness of time the destroyer, as it is in many of Shakespeare's Sonnets. The attack on honour is in any case secondary to satire on the Court, both here and in Sodom.[49] Just how secondary it is can be seen if it is compared with Falstaff's utterances on the subject, or Butler's parody of the heroic debate between honour and "love" in Repartees between Cat and Puss at a Caterwauling in the Modern Heroic Way, or indeed Rochester's own parody of this debate,* in which the last word may be allowed to Cuntigratia, Queen of Sodom, lamenting her desertion:

> Does then my Passion to contempt remove,
> The Trophies of his Honour and my Love,
> Oh Buggeranthos, had my Passion been
> Deckt with the State and Grandeur of a Queen
> To loose a Love I had not then betray'd
> My Love had more my Majesty obey'd.
> My Passion like a prodigal did treat
> With all the chief varieties of meat
> And now the pamper'd Letcher scornes to eat.[50]

Here the sex roles are completely reversed from their usual presentation in heroic drama. In Valentinian, Claudia remains unmoved by Marcellina's libertine arguments, and her retort associates wit with vice, in the orthodox manner:

> Concluded like they self, for sure thou art
> The most corrupting thing alive,
> Yet glory not too much in cheating Wit:
> 'Tis but false Wisdom; and its Property,
> Has ever been to take the part of Vice. (III iii, p. 31)

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* Dryden's statement on the subject can be found in Of Heroic Plays: An Essay, prefixed to The Conquest of Granada, in Two Parts (1672) (Essays, ed. Watson, I, pp. 158ff.).

Their altercation is resurrected in Joseph Dormer's ballad comedy, The Female Rake: or, Modern Fine Lady (1736), where Libertina's resolution to "make the most of ev'ry Hour; for ev'ry Moment, not bestow'd on Pleasure, is for ever lost"[51] meets with an even more prudish response from her cousin Sylvia.

Valentinian is consistent with Rochester's early satires, and the growing disillusion expressed in them has a strong counterpart in the play. This is particularly true of the cynical comments of Lycinius. Acting as chorus, he regales the audience with a running commentary on the rape of Lucina, which occurs off-stage. As well as general remarks on women and other subjects, he has this to say on virtue:

> 'Tis strange there should be such a difference
> Betwixt half-ravishing, which most Women love,
> And through force, which takes away all Blame,
> And should be therefore welcome to the vertuous. (p. 47)

Lycinius is clearly far from impartial, and there should be little temptation to identify his position with Rochester's, which (like Oldham's) remains ambivalent. There would be more justification to do this with the character of Maximus, or with the bitterly facetious Epilogue, a satire on the prevalence of cuckoldry, particularly as the disgust for the theatrical world displayed in it finds similar expression in a fragment of Rochester's beginning "What vain, unnecessary things are men !" Here, as in the concluding section of the Satyr, hypocrisy is the primary target:

> To theaters, as temples, you are brought,
> Where Love is worshipped, and his precepts taught.
> You must go home and practice, for 'tis here
> Just as in other preaching places, where
> Great eloquence is shown 'gainst sin and papists
> By men who live idolaters and atheists. (p. 102)

Rochester's disillusionment with the beau monde is most masterfully expressed in A Letter from Artemisia in the Town to Chloe in the Country. Artemisia, who nearly always speaks for Rochester, voices her disgust with the life she sees around her in phrases such as "lands of atheists" and "this lewd town". Love has been "so debauched by ill-bred customs here" that it is called "that lost thing". Artemisia's romantic view of love is contrasted with the stark reality of life itself, when she calls love:

> That cordial drop heaven in our cup has thrown
> To make the nauseous draught of life go down. (ll. 44-5, p. 105)

Love has been debased by the trading in it which now goes on everywhere, a situation for which women, though they are its main victims, are chiefly to blame:

> Our silly sex ! who, born like monarchs free,
> Turn gypsies for a meaner liberty,
> And hate restraint, though but from infamy.
> They call whatever is not common, nice,
> And deaf to nature's rule, or love's advice,
> Forsake the pleasure to pursue the vice.
> To an exact perfection they have wrought
> The action, love; the passion is forgot.
> 'Tis below wit, they tell you, to admire,
> And ev'n without approving, they desire. (ll. 56-65, pp. 105-6)

This mechanical, passionless sex is precisely what the libertine speaker had attacked in A Ramble in St. James's Park. The added refinement of voicing the criticism through a lady of the beau monde not only removes any possibility of jealousy as a motive for the attack, but enables the speaker to give a more convincing refutation of the argument for female liberation, which we have seen Shadwell's shepherdesses use in The Libertine, where phrases such as "meaner liberty", "hate restraint" and "nature's rule" had become mere clichés.

The exemplum whereby Artemisia illustrates her central contention about women is a "fine lady", who, Artemisia later explains, is "an ass through choice, not want of wit" (l. 151). The lady herself tells us:

> When I was married, fools were à la mode.
> The men of wit were then held incommode. (ll. 103-4, p. 107)

Her principle is that ignorance is bliss where the affairs of love are concerned, an antirationalistic position. Those who do not adopt this stance remain unable to appreciate "The perfect joy of being well deceived" (l. 115), a sentiment which has a prominent place in the history of cuckoldry. So she sticks to her preference for fools, in accordance with her antirationalistic principles. However, her behaviour with the monkey shows how those principles can be carried too far:

> The dirty, chattering monster she embraced,
> And made it this fine, tender speech at last:
> "Kiss me, thou curious miniature of man !
> How odd thou art ! how pretty ! how japan !
> Oh, I could live and die with thee !" Then on
> For half an hour in compliment she run. (ll. 141-6, p. 108)

Rochester is here satirising the ridiculous consequances of an extreme adherence to the position he had put forward in the Satyr: too great a preference for the instinctual life of the beasts, at the expense of right reason's restraining influence.

To prove her point about fools, the "fine lady" tells the story of Corinna, who, having been undone by "a man of wit" (l. 198), is redeemed by a fool:

> From pedagogue and mother just set free,
> The heir and hopes of a great family;
> Which, with strong ale and beef, the country rules,*
> And ever since the Conquest have been fools.

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* This speech presents the town-dweller's stereotypical view of the country bumpkin. Rochester's own attitude to the country is more complex than that presented by Swift and Fielding, one side of which appears to be anticipated here.

And now, with careful prospect to maintain
This character, lest crossing of the strain
Should mend the booby breed, his friends provide
A cousin of his own to be his bride. (ll. 211-18, p. 111)

This young man's aspirations being greater than his wit, "he comes to town,/Turns spark, learns to be lewd, and is undone." (ll. 222-3). Here the lady remarks:

Nothing suits worse with vice than want of sense:
Fools are still wicked at their own expense. (ll. 224-5)

Corinna takes advantage of "This o'ergrown schoolboy", whom she soon reduces to the state of penury she had herself suffered at the hands of the "man of wit". The dénouement follows quickly:

And when t' th' height of fondness he is grown,
'Tis time to poison him, and all's her own.
Thus meeting in her common arms his fate,
He leaves her bastard heir to his estate,
And, as the race of such an owl deserves,
His own dull lawful progeny he starves. (ll. 246-51, p. 112)

The lady cynically concludes that:

"Nature, who never made a thing in vain,
But does each insect to its end ordain,
Wisely contrived kind keeping fools, no doubt,
To patch up vices men of wit wear out." (ll. 252-5)

The delicate handling of the numerous points of view in this poem makes it one of Rochester's most subtle and rewarding efforts. Pope and Swift both borrowed from it, and the question of which point of view in the poem most nearly approximates to Rochester's is as complex as it is in some of their works.

The utterances of Bajazet in <u>A Very Heroical Epistle in Answer to Ephelia</u> are similar in tone to those of Valentinian and Nero. An imitation of Ovid's <u>Heroides</u>, it is an answer to Etherege's <u>Ephelia to Bajazet</u>. Bajazet, the Turkish Emperor defeated by Tamburlaine, had been presented by Marlowe as a haughty and self-

centred beast. Rochester applies the name to his enemy, Mulgrave, who appears in the poem as a caricature of a libertine, expressing total egoism and egotism: "In my dear self I center everything."* (l. 7) Everyone and everything must submit to his will, and it is no part of his philosophy to show consideration for anyone else's:

> Should I regard, I must myself constrain,
> And 'tis my maxim to avoid all pain. (p. 113)

Besides this parody of the Epicurean position, many of the familiar naturalistic and deterministic arguments are adduced:

> For 'tis as natural to change, as love.
> You may as justly at the sun repine
> Because alike it does not always shine. (ll. 17-19)

He goes on to boast of the pleasure he brings to the ladies, and he envies the sultan, who embodies his dream of an egoistical paradise, a parody of the pleasures of rest:

> Thee like some god the trembling crowd adore;
> Each man's they slave, and womankind thy whore ...
> Secure in solid sloth thou there does reign,
> And feel'st the joys of love without the pain. (p. 114)

In this fantasy he resembles Jonson's Epicure Mammon, as well as echoing some of the attitude of Puss, the spokesman for "love" in opposition to "honour" in Butler's Repartees between Cat and Puss, who has such lines as "Pain is the foil of pleasure and delight," "Love is too full of honour to regard/What it enjoys," "Pleasure is pain", and "Nothing is wrong but that which is ill meant".[52]

The theme of Mulgrave as libertine is further developed in An Epistolary Essay from M.G. to O.B., where the satire is this time directed primarily against Mulgrave's poetry:

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* Cf. the "overweening pride" of Swift's spider in The Battle of the Books: "I am ... furnished with a native stock within myself. This large castle ... is all built with my own hands, and the materials extracted altogether out of my own person."

I'm none of those who think themselves inspired,
Nor write with the vain hopes to be admired,
But from a rule I have upon long trial:
T'avoid with care all sort of self-denial
Which way so'er desire and fancy lead,
Contemning fame, that path I boldly tread.
And if, exposing what I take for wit,
To my dear self a pleasure I beget,
No matter though the censuring critic fret. (ll. 12-20, p. 145)

His total selfishness has a disastrous effect on his critical faculties:

Born to myself, myself I like alone
And must conclude my judgment good, or none. (p. 147)

But his motive for writing has by this time been established as a physical one. Rochester compares Mulgrave's need to write with his need to evacuate - a masterful piece of deflation, worthy of Pope. In addition to the excremental image, Bajazet's line: "I'd fart, just as I write, for my own ease," is another parody of the Epicurean state of rest.* The lampoon on Mulgrave, My Lord All-Pride (pp. 142-3), also uses the excremental image, to suggest that Mulgrave passed off as his own poems that were really written by Dryden and others.

The Lucretian detached spectator is parodied in the heroic stanzas of The Disabled Debauchee, where the shattered roué who declaims them compares himself to some brave admiral surveying the battle from a point of vantage:

So, when my days of impotence approach,
And I'm by pox and wine's unlucky chance
Forced from the pleasing billows of debauch
On the dull shore of lazy temperance,

My pains at least some respite shall afford
While I behold the battles you maintain
When fleets of glasses sail about the board,
From whose broadsides volleys of wit shall rain. (p. 116)

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* Swift's spider, "by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at last, but flybane and a cobweb".

The rake hopes that his "honorable scars" of venereal disease will not discourage "new-listed soldiers from the wars", and defiantly insists that "Past joys have more than paid what I endure". The exploits he boasts of are those of the rakehell, and cannot possibly be seriously expected to elicit admiration:

> I'll tell of whores attacked, their lords at home;
> Bawds' quarters beaten up, and fortress won;
> Windows demolished, watches overcome;
> And handsome ills by my contrivance done. (p. 117)

By recounting tales of such activities as these and "our love-fits, Chloris," to "any youth (worth being drunk)", he maintains that he:

> ... will such thoughts inspire
> As to important mischief shall incline:
> I'll make him long some ancient church to fire,
> And fear no lewdness he's called to by wine.

His joy will be to divert the youth from the influence of "dull morals", to follow a course of debauchery like his. But after the extravagance of his claims and of the activities he describes, he strikes a realistic note with his suggestion in the last stanza of the gulf between youth and age, where the traditionally honourable attributes of age merely denote an inability to act any longer:

> Thus, statesmanlike, I'll saucily impose,
> And safe from action, valiantly advise;
> Sheltered in impotence, urge you to blows,
> And being good for nothing else, be wise. (p. 117)

These sentiments are echoed in Rochester's Epilogue to <u>Circe</u>:

> Fools censure wit as old men rail of sin,
> Who envy pleasure which they cannot taste,
> And, good for nothing, would be wise at last. (p. 140)

The "maimed debauchee" comes to a similar conclusion, but remains defiant and unrepentant.

The exploits he describes, and his defiance, are reminiscent of Don Juan, especially as presented by Shadwell. The same is true of Rochester's lines To the Postboy, where he asks for, and is told, "the readiest way to Hell", rather like Don John addressing the statue. "These strange half-boastful, half-penitential verses", as Vieth calls them (p. 130), were apparently prompted by Rochester's part in the brawl at Epsom, in which his friend Downs was killed.

The ravages of time the destroyer receive quite different treatment in Upon Nothing, a poem which gives the appearance of being as sceptical, dispassionate and impersonal as any that Rochester wrote. It belongs to the genre of the "Paradoxical Encomium",[53] a species of poem which ironically praises an unworthy subject, but a more immediate source of its parody is the account of the Creation in Cowley's Hymn to Light and Davideis.[54] According to Rochester's version, "Nothing" had an existence prior to the Creation, since in orthodox Christian theology God created the world from nothing:

> With Form and Matter, Time and Place did join;
> Body, thy foe, with these did leagues combine
> To spoil thy peaceful realm, and ruin all thy line; (p. 118).

Instead of Lucifer, Time was the first rebel, and this is why man's life is short:

> But turncoat Time assists the foe in vain,
> And bribed by thee, destroys their short-lived reign,
> And to thy hungry womb drives back thy slaves again. (p. 119)

In the end, the poem says, all, including the politicians and the clerics, together with the meaningless ceremonies which they devise, must come to Nothing. Though the satire remains general, it is

particularised sufficiently to give it point; and it is easy to see why this poem was highly regarded in the eighteenth century, when Dulness was imagined as a godess, and when Swift's Modern was surpassed by several writers in miscellanies and magazines, who really did produce pieces on Nothing. Upon Nothing anticipates Rochester's last known poem, the lines translated from Seneca's Troades beginning "After death nothing is, and nothing, death", and containing the line "Devouring time swallows us whole", which he sent to the deist Charles Blount in February 1680 (p. 150). One of the more tasteless uses of Rochester's conversion for propaganda purposes was Tom Durfey's A Lash at Atheists: The Poet speaking, as the Ghost of a Quondam Libertine, suppos'd to be the late E[arl] of R[ochester] reflects on that part of Seneca's Troas beginning at Post Mortem nihil est ... (1690),[55] which considerably travesties Rochester's position.

Vieth says that "The last four years of Rochester's life were characterised by prolonged illness, depressed spirits, and increasing seriousness of intention, and a poetical output that dwindled appreciably in quantity and quality". (p. xxxi) The growing disillusion and disgust which we have observed in the poems was reinforced by certain unfortunate events and circumstances in Rochester's life, at least from the spring of 1676. Rochester's fame and reputation were then at their height: in March he was immortalised as Dorimant* in Etherege's Man of Mode. But shortly

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*Brice Harris has convincingly argued that Dorimant was a composite picture of Rochester and Middlesex, as he was then titled (Charles Sackville, Sixth Earl of Dorset (Urbana, Ill., 1940), pp. 67-9). Both may be said to have contributed to the stereotype of the libertine, which Dorimant, in his turn, helped to strengthen.

afterwards his fortunes took a downward turn. Following the Epsom mêlée he was the subject of many vicious rumours, the most notorious being the widely held belief that he was responsible for the attack on Dryden in Rose Alley. By October 1677 he could describe himself to Savile, with typical self-dramatisation, as "a Man whom it is the great Mode to hate".[56] The letters to his friend Savile express much of the same disgust at the condition of society that we have seen in poems such as Artemisia to Chloe. On 21 November 1679, for example, he wrote: "Hypocrisie being the only Vice in decay amongst us; few men here dissemble their being Rascals; and no Woman disowns being a Whore ..." (p. 73) Though his retirement from this world into the country was really enforced by his various misfortunes, Rochester at least once expresses a positive preference for it. In the spring of 1676 he wrote praising the "generous Philosophy" of Philip Sidney, Lord Lisle, whose happy life of retirement on his estate at Sheen (a form of refined Epicureanism) he contrasts with "my Lord Mulgrave's mean Ambition". (p. 41) Perhaps the most striking message of the Rochester-Savile letters is the firm advocacy of friendship as a positive ideal, another Epicurean attribute. In his last surviving letter to Savile, Rochester expresses his gratitude to his friend: "... you have made my heart glad in giving me such a Proof of your friendship, and I am now sensible that it is natural for you to be kind to me, and can never more despair of it". (p. 73) This friendship evidently contributed a degree of the stability which Rochester craved in his life.

Pinto describes Rochester's conversion as "the culminating point of a dialectical process which had been going on in his mind for years". (p. 186) He sees in the Satyr, probably written in March 1676, signs that Rochester is moving towards a rejection of Hobbist materialism. Not yet ready to accept the orthodox answers, which he still associated with narrow and insincere religiosity, it was natural for Rochester to seek the solution to his questioning in other unorthodox creeds current in Western Europe. Pinto asserts that he probably knew something of the works of the French libertins, and this is confirmed by Griffin, who has demonstrated Rochester's debt to the poets Théophile de Viau, Mathurin Régnier, Jean Dehénault, Antoine Baraby de la Luzerne, Jacques Vallée Des Barreaux', "and their literary descendant Boileaux".[57] Pinto further speculates that Rochester might have read the anti-Christian Quatrains du Déiste. In the spring of 1676 a poem called Faith and Reason, bearing some resemblance to the Quatrains, was circulating around London in manuscript. This poem, which was at first attributed to Rochester, was written by Sir William Davenant, and takes the form of an extra canto to his unfinished epic Gondibert. In a long monologue in it Thanour expounds doubts on the subject of Faith and Reason, with powerful arguments against orthodox religion. He is speaking to his master, Astrogon, and the association with Rochester may have been due to the supposition that Davenant meant Astrogon to represent Hobbes, and Thanour, his leading disciple, Rochester. John Verney, son of Rochester's former guardian Sir Ralph, believed the poem to be Rochester's, and compared its use of

"sense" with that in the Satyr. Thanour is certainly bitterly antirationalistic, in the manner of the libertine spokesman in the Satyr who had contemptuously dismissed reason as an "ignis fatuus":

> Then hard is Destinie's dark law; whose Text,
> We are forbid to read, yet must obey;
> And reason with her useless eyes is vext,
> Which strives to guide her where they see no way.[58]

If all this is rather conjectural, Rochester's meetings with young Charles Blount,* one of the leading deists, provide stronger and better documented evidence of his association with prominent unorthodox philosophies of the time. They became acquainted in London during the winter of 1678-9, and met again in February 1680, when they discussed immortality and the soul. Blount expounded his views for Rochester's benefit in The Oracles of Reason. Rochester asked for the views of his father, Sir Henry Blount, on the union of the soul and the body. In his explanation Blount admits the existence of a divine element which "does all things" in the world, but argues that since man is incapable of discerning it, "all Philosophy, excepting Scepticism, is little more than Dotage".[59] Pinto comments that this was no use to Rochester, who was by now ready to experience personally this Divinum Aliquid, and experience he had previously been denied by the barriers thrown up by the particular form of Christianity practised in his age and country. (p. 192)

Pinto describes the last phase of Rochester's life as "the establishment of contact between his proud and fearless spirit, and

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*Blount's Miscellaneous Works (1695) contain several expositions of refined Epicureanism. He also seems the most likely author of a thoroughgoing libertine statement in lyric form, known in some versions as The libertine (1691 ?), attributed to Etherege. (James Thorpe, ed., The Poems of Sir George Etherege (Princeton, 1963), pp. 134-57.

the one kind of contemporary religion that could help him, the rationalized latitudinarian Anglicanism of the Restoration". (p. 193). Rochester's starting point in his discussions with Burnet was that of "the sceptical deist of the school of Lord Herbert of Cherbury and Charles Blount, and Burnet's that of the liberal Anglican of the school of Whichcote and Smith". (pp. 196-7) Burnet, he points out, minimised dogma, and laid the greatest stress on religious experience. This was the technique of his masters, the Cambridge Platonists, and was well suited to an age that was impatient with mystery but respectful of what could be proved by practical experiment. Since this accords well with his thesis that Rochester's life was itself an experiment in living the life of pleasure, but that he was really always looking for something more lasting, it is not surprising that Pinto devotes a great deal of space to his conversations with Burnet. This being the case, it is necessary only to observe their salient points.

Rochester, who confessed to Burnet that "for five years together he was continually Drunk; not all the while under the visible effects of it, but his blood was so inflamed, that he was not in all that time cool enough to be perfectly Master of himself",[60] started from a position of cheerful Epicureanism: "The two Maxims of his Morality then were, that he should do nothing to the hurt of any other, or that might prejudice his own health". (p. 57) All pleasure, especially "the free use of Wine and Women" was to be indulged when it did not interfere with these, "as gratification of our natural Appetites". (p. 57) Burnet had already advised that

the Stoic maxim that all passion should be extirpated was impracticable, since contrary to nature. (p. 57) Rochester had reached the point where he could disavow the mere immoralism that had governed much of his life, and declare himself to be ashamed of it, but "rather because he had made himself a Beast, and had brought pain and sickness on his Body, and had suffered much in his Reputation, than from any deep sense of a Supream being, or another State". (p. 56) He regarded his faults not as sins but as "Injuries to himself and to Mankind", (p. 56), and was thus transgressing his own two maxims. Although Rochester did not believe in the rewards which Burnet held up as more important than pleasures, the divine claimed success in the end:

> The issue of all our Discourses was this, He told me, He saw Vice and Impiety were as contrary to Humane Society, as wild Beasts let loose would be; and therefore he firmly resolved to change the whole method of his Life: to become strictly just and true, to be Chast and Temperate, to forbear Swearing and Irreligious Discourse, to Worship and Pray to his Maker. (pp. 78-9)

And finally "He told me ... all the Pleasures he had ever known in Sin, were not worth that torture he had felt in his Mind". (p. 79) This humble, contrite confession of guilt may be compared with the half-hearted ironic bravado of <u>The Disabled Debauchee</u>.

Rationally convinced by Burnet's arguments in favour of Christian ethics, Rochester was not yet "arrived at a full persuasion of <u>Christianity</u>". But he promised "he would never employ his Wit more to run it down, or to corrupt others". (p. 79) Burnet was confident that a mind such as Rochester's, when "cleared of these

Disorders" and "cured of those Distempers, which Vice brought on it", would "soon see through all those flights of Wit, that do feed Atheism and Irreligion". (p. 79) His conviction was finally felt with his spiritual experience during the reading of Isaiah, Chapter 53, by his mother's chaplain, Robert Parsons, in his terminal illness. (p. 82) This happendd on 19 June 1680. He at once called in all his servants and made a public recantation, and he ordered all his lewd and profane writings to be burnt.[61] Five weeks later he was dead.

Rochester's death in 1680 represented the end of an era, and there is a recognition of this in several of the many elegies and tributes, from a wide variety of hands, which it occasioned. These included works by Oldham and Aphra Behn among the professional poets; Ann Wharton, Rochester's relative and an aristocratic amateur poet; Thomas Flatman, an Oxford academic, and his friend Samuel Woodford, an Anglican priest, and the divines Burnet and Parsons. One should mention too Lee's sincere praise in his Princess of Cleves, and a few years later the numerous Prefaces to Valentinian, that by Robert Wolseley being the only tribute to come from an aspirant to the circle of wit, a fact which indicates that Rochester was regarded as a major poet by a wide cross-section of society, and not merely by a fashionable clique. In addition, his stature as a satirist is attested to by the use made of his name in lampoons such as Rochester's Farewell (1680)[62] and "Rochester's Ghost",[63] where, as in John Ayloffe's Marvell's Ghost, "Rochester" applies a Juvenalian lash to various contemporary figures in Court and society at large.

Aphra Behn's Elegy is almost the only one of these pieces which strikes the proper balance between Rochester's life and his poetry:

> So rich a Prize the Stygian Gods ne're bore,
> Such Wit, such Beauty, never grac'd their Shore.
> He was but lent this duller World t'improve
> In all the charms of Poetry, and Love;
> Both were his gift, which freely he bestow'd,
> And like a God, dealt to the wond'ring Crowd. [64]

She celebrates his beauty and his love, as well as his wit and his poetry. Her portrait of Rochester is more alive as a result of this:

> Think how he lov'd, and writ, and sigh'd, and spoke,
> Recall his Meen, his Fashion, and his Look.
> By what dear Arts the Soul he did surprize,
> Soft as his Voice, and charming as his Eyes. (p. 102)

This is refreshing, because it is the genuine response of a real woman to a real man.

At the same time, Aphra Behn does not underestimate the importance of Rochester's satire:

> Satyr has lost its Art, its Sting is gone,
> The Fop and Cully now may be undone;
> That dear instructing Rage is now allay'd,
> And no sharp Pen dares tell 'em how they've stray'd;
> Bold as a God was ev'ry lash he took,
> But kind and gentle the chastising stroke.
> Mourn, Mourn, ye Youths, whom Fortune has betray'd,
> The last Reproacher of your Vice is dead. (p. 102)

The poem ends with some elaborate compliments to Rochester's excellence in the two realms of love and poetry. The comparison with Lucretius is, for once, appropriate, and the lines "large was his Fame, but short his Glorious Race,/Like young Lucretius liv'd and dy'd apace" introduce the closing section of the poem, leading into a touching metaphor of an early rose which spreads its scent as it fades.

Ann Wharton's Elegy on Rochester was the most popular of all of them, and was even commended by no less a poet than Waller. (p. 108). Nevertheless, the liveliness of Aphra Behn's tribute is missing from it, and it is essentially a personal expression of grief rather than a well-balanced celebration of its subject's life. Oldham's Bion is also disappointing, and is of interest largely only because Oldham acknowledges in it his debt to Rochester. Its compliments, whether or not demanded by the pastoral form, are over elaborate, though they sound sincere enough. They include an extended comparison of Rochester with Spenser, and the assertion that Rochester's death is more lamented than that of any other English poet, including Chaucer, Milton or Cowley. (p. 98)

If Oldham exaggerates Rochester's poetic achievement, correspondingly lofty claims are made for his life by the anonymous author of another of the elegies of 1680. He calls Rochester "th'earliest Wit, and the most sudden Saint". We know what was behind the course of his life, he says, even if others do not:

> What tho the Vulgar may traduce thy ways,
> And strive to rob thee of thy Moral Praise ?
> If, with they Rival Solomon's intent,
> Thou sin'dst a little for Experiment;
> Or to maintain a Paradox, which none
> Had Wit to answer but thy self alone. (p. 113)

Leaving aside the comparison with Solomon, who is today better remembered for his wisdom, the observation that Rochester's life was an experiment which others were unable to understand is an astute one, which Pinto made the underlying theme of his book on Rochester.

But this writer feels the need to capitalise to the fullest possible extent on Rochester's conversion and its effect. By implying that the whole of his life and repentance were planned by Rochester for the purpose stated, he detracts from the sincerity of both:

> An unexpected change attracts all Eyes,
> They needs must conquer that can well surprise.
> Now Lechers whom the Pox cou'd ne'er convert,
> Know where to fix a restless rambling heart.
> Drunkards whose Soule, not their sick Maws love Drink,
> Confound their Glasses, and begin to think.
> The Atheist now has nothing left to say,
> His Arguments were lent for sport not prey.
> . . . . . .
> Thy dying words, (than thousands of Harangues,
> Urg'd with grimaces, fortifi'd with Bangs
> On dreadful Pulpit) have made more recant,
> Than Plague, or War, or Penitential want;
> A declaration so well tim'd, has gain'd
> More Proselytes than e're thy wildness feign'd;
> Mad Debochees, whom thou didst but allure
> With pleasant Baits, and tempt 'em to their cure. (pp. 113-4)

The majority of those who wrote at Rochester's death were concerned to make capital out of it. Burnet and Parsons were no exception, although their close knowledge of the man adds considerable interest to their accounts of him. This redeeming quality is missing from Samuel Woodford's <u>Ode to the Memory of the Right Honourable John Lord Wilmot Earl of Rochester</u>. Here Rochester's life is presented as a kind of "Pilgrim's Progress" in search of "The happy Land of Poesy Divine". Ironically, these lines echo Rochester's attack on false reason in the <u>Satyr against Mankind</u>:

> But long he wandred first, and erring oft did stray
> Often and long both miss't and chang'd his Way
> And was so oft with Paynted shewes deceiv'd to stay
> (Alas! whom have not paynted shewes deceiv'd
> Tho happy they who have their errors griev'd
> And the true road at last retriev'd!)
> Even Cowley ready was to say
> Now here, now there the undiscover'd Country lay. (p. 117)

Woodford rambles on in this vein for many a stanza. At length he remarks that Rochester was equipped to: "expresse/The loftyest subject, in the most becoming dresse". He bemoans what he sees as the waste of such talents:

> Ah! that it had been so employd!
> And that or Nothing, or than Nothing worse,
> Reason debas't, affronted Heav'ns last curse,
> Fulsome Atheism, wherwith the age is cloyd,
> (Rank seed, rank soyle, wch every yeare
> The same ungratefull crop dos beare)
> Relligion rallyed, Vertue, and Mankind,
> Had not been all the Theames, the noblest pen could find.
> (p. 122)

As befits an orthodox divine, Woodford attacks wit extensively in his poem. Samuel Holland, in his Elegie, is likewise apologetic about Rochester's wit:

> Excess of Wit alone his Fame did spoil,
> So lamps extinguish't are by too much Oil. (p. 128)

He too is intent upon making the most for propaganda purposes of Rochester's repentance. The opening lines* set the tone:

> No more, wild Atheists ! No more Deny
> That blessed Hope which makes us glad to Dye; (p. 128)

and it concludes with an "Epitaph", which, although it gives credit to the effect of Rochester's wit, condemns the instrument itself:

> Under this Tomb we do Interr
> The Ashes of Great Rochester;
> Whose pointed Wit (his worst of Crimes)
> So Justly lasht our Foppish Times;
> Let none too Rigorous Censures fix
> Great Errors with great Parts will mix;
> How broad soe're his Faults be shown,
> His Penitence as large was known.
> Forbear then ! - and let you and I
> By him, at least, learn how to Dye. (p. 130)

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*They may have given Tom Durfey the hint for The Libertine Overthrown: or, a Mirror for Atheists (1690), an even more offensive sequel to Rochester's death.

Besides being illogical, the whole air of this is patronising, the result of Holland's antipathy to Rochester's wit. Aphra Behn, whose poem celebrates that very quality of his, as well as demonstrating it herself, has written a more sincere elegy, and a more fitting, because a more understanding memorial to Rochester.

Aphra Behn's commitment to wit is further asserted in her Prologue to Rochester's Valentinian, which was first acted in 1684:

> Wit, sacred Wit, is all the bus'ness here;
> Great Fletcher, and the greater Rochester. (p. 133)

Of Rochester's inspiration and subject she again says:

> The Gods of Love and Wit inspir'd his Pen,
> And Love and Beauty was his glorious Theam. (p. 133)

An anonymous Prologue for the second night of the play elaborated on how the love and wit worked together:

> Our Author lov'd the youthful and the fair,
> But even in those their Follies could not spare;
> Bid them discreetly use their present store,
> Be Friends to Pleasure, when they please no more;
> Desir'd the Ladies of maturer Ages,
> If some remaining Spark their Hearts enrages,
> At home to quench their Embers with their Pages.
> Pert, patch'd, and painted, there to spend their days;
> Not crowd the fronts of Boxes at new Plays:
> Advis'd young sighing Fools to be more pressing,
> And Fops of Forty to give over dressing.
> By this he got the Envy of the Age,
> No Fury's like a libell'd Blockhead's Rage,
> Hence some despis'd him for his want of Wit,
> And others said he too obscenely writ. (p. 134)

The sentiments and the language are almost worthy of Rochester himself. The reference in the penultimate line is to Mulgrave's attack on him (motivated by jealousy) in his Essay upon Satire. Poor Rochester was castigated on the one hand for lacking wit, on the other for having too much. Yet if in this, as in other ways, he could not win, his reputation has more than survived the pusillanimous criticisms of his contemporaries.

The twin themes of love and satire are neatly embodied in another anonymous Prologue to Valentinian:

> Some Beauties here I see -
> Though now demure, have felt his pow'rful Charms,
> And languish'd in the circle of his Arms.
> But for ye Fops, his Satyr reach'd ye all,
> Under his Lash your whole vast Herd did fall.
> Oh fatal loss! that mighty Spirit's gone!
> Alas! his too great heat went out too soon!
> So fatal is it vastly to excel;
> Thus young, thus mourn'd, his lov'd Lucretius fell. (p. 136)

It was as a Lucretius, rather than a Petronius,[65] that his contemporaries saw him.

Valentinian also afforded the opportunity for Robert Wolseley to write a Preface which is one of the most important contemporary appreciations of Rochester. Wolseley sees Rochester's wit and satire as basic components of his character, but he also attests to his "becoming gentleness" and bewitchingly soft civility. His wit was that of the true nobleman:

> ... for as he was both the Delight and the Wonder of Men, the Love and the Dotage of Women, so he was a continual Curb to Impertinence and the publick Censor of Folly. Never did Man stay in his Company un-entertain'd, or leave it un-instructed; never was his Understanding biass'd, or his Pleasantness forc'd; never did he laugh in the wrong place, or prostitute his Sence to serve his Luxury; never did he stab into the Wounds of a fallen Virtue, with a base and cowardly Insult, or smooth the Face of prosperous Villany, with the Paint and Washes of a mercenary Wit; never did he spare a Fop for being rich or flatter a Knave for being great. (p. 139)

After showing that Rochester played a particularly important role in an age which was so in need of satire, Wolseley concludes his "Character" by saying: I think I may truly affirm, he did the World as much good by a right application of Satyre, as he hurt himself by a wrong pursuit of Pleasure." (p. 141) As a contemporary judgement, this rivals Marvell's opinion, recorded by John Aubrey, that Rochester "was the best English satyrist and had the right veine". (p. 178)

Wolseley's Preface is a moralising Theophrastan "Character" of Rochester, as opposed to a witty polemical satire.[66] The latter type of Character in the manner of Butler was used equally effectively for both satirical and libertine ends by Ned Ward and other imitators, as we will see in the next Chapter. Tom Brown in A Short Essay on English Satire, having singled out Rochester, Dorset and Oldham as the three great wits of the Restoration generation, criticises Oldham for being motivated to too great an extent by personal disgust, saying that instead of exposing vice and encouraging virtue he does only the former. He contrasts Dorset's temperament with Rochester's "ill-nature", and comes to the opposite conclusion from Wolseley about it:

> My Lord Rochester was always witty, and always very ill-natured; he never troubl'd himself much about correcting the Vice, unless it disturb'd him in his Pleasure, (for reforming the Age was none of his Province) he generally took care to expose the Person, and that in such a manner, as usually begat more Crimes in those that were the Subjects of his Satires, than he corrected Faults. His Wit was often prophane, and he neither spar'd Prince nor God, from whom he receiv'd both the greatest Abilities, a splendid Title, and a magnificent Fortune. (p. 176)

It is fair to say that the truth lies somewhere between these two judgements.

3 Etherege: the rake unreformed

By the time Rochester died in 1680, the Wits' heyday was already over. The solidity of their well-ordered world's shared assumptions had begun to crumble. After the Third Dutch War the King and his mistresses came increasingly under attack, often from the Wits themselves, but more frequently from political opponents

outside their group. Besides the changed political situation, literary taste was beginning to favour sentimentalism, which was quite at odds with the Wits' cynical realism. Many of them, in any case, were becomming personally disillusioned with hedonism, a process we have traced in Rochester, whose conversion made a tremendous impact on his own and succeeding generations. In the years immediately after his death, Buckingham, Sedley and Dorset all followed a comparable course in their own personal lives. Dorset and Sedley left the Court on the accession of James II, and actively supported the Whig cause in 1688. After King William succeeded to the throne the movement to reform manners gained impetus from his Protestantism, and in the later years of the century a new generation of wits were fighting a rearguard action against the shock troops of this new morality, zealously led by Sir Richard Blackmore.

Sir George Etherege remained loyal to King James, and his Letterbook records his correspondence as Ambassador in Ratisbon. The Ministers in King James's Government to whom he wrote include Mulgrave and Henry Guy, and the Letterbook is an important source of information concerning the Wits in the late 1680's. It paints a fascinating picture of Etherege himself, who was something of an oddity, particularly by virtue of being almost unique amongst libertines in dying unrepentant and unconverted. He was determined to remain, as he put it, "constant to ourselves",[67] and in his case this meant persevering to the end of debauchery. Oldys relates a picturesque story that he died by falling down stairs and breaking

his neck whilst drunkenly showing some guests off the premises.[68] This is apocryphal, but it would have been appropriate. In fact, he died in 1691 at Paris, whence he fled from Ratisbon on King William's accession.

In March 1687 Mulgrave suggests the ravages debauchery has caused in him, when, at the age of thirty-nine, he thanks Etherege for one of his typical reminiscences about a past mistress:

> ... the remembrance of her being very sweet, both as a pleasure enjoyed and a danger escaped. I am not so young now, but that I can chew the cud of lechery with some sort of satisfaction; you who are so amorous and vigorous may have your mind wholly taken up with the present but we grave, decayed people, alas, are glad to steal a thought sometimes towards the past, and then are to ask God forgiveness for it too. (p. 357)

In his reply Etherege returns the compliment, but admits his dread of old age:

> The pleasure you have given me makes me forgive the malice you have shewed in putting me in mind of my being old. I have always by my way of living taken care to banish age from my thoughts, and what have I done to provoke your envy, who are young and vigorous, to remember me that I bear a burthen on my back humour makes me insensible of ? It is but seldom I have had occasion in this grave place to draw my bow, and when I have I did not perceive my nerves were slackened. You should quietly have let me alone till age had surprised me and not have wounded my imagination with your raillery. (p. 182)

Perhaps we may conclude that Etherege, aged over fifty, was lucky to have the inclination and ability to "draw his bow", when we compare his health to Rochester's in his last years. However, in a letter to Henry Guy (Secretary to the Treasury) he expresses his determination to grow old gracefully:

> As for our women, they are a commodity which will turn to no account in England, especially to you who, as well as myself, have by a long experience of the frailties of the sex, almost acquired a perfect chastity; but while

> we approach this virtue let us take care our years do not sour us with any of the common vices of age; let us still preserve our good humour and our good nature, to make us welcome near those young people who possess that plentiful estate we have pretty well run out of, that we may help them rail at the morose and cry out with Falstaff; down with them they hate us young men. (p. 283)

This has some of the bravado of Rochester's Maimed Debauchee, but lacks its exaggeration, and is fairly dignified in its effect. The choice of Falstaff as his model is an illuminating indication of Etherege's problem, which was the same as that facing Falstaff and any other libertine: how to reconcile his commitment to libertinism with approaching old age.

The most detailed statement of Etherege's libertinism appears in a letter which he wrote to Buckingham from Ratisbon on 12 November 1686. He begins by chiding the Duke for his reformation:

> I received the News of your Grace's retiring into Yorkshire, and leading a sedate contemplative life there, with no less Astonishment than I should hear of his Christian Majesty's turning Benedictine Monk, or the Pope's wearing a long Perriwig and setting up for a flaming Beau in the seventy fourth year of his Age. (p. 411)

He goes on to say that he is reminded of Charles V's decision "to pass the Remainder of his Life in Solitude and Retirement". He finds Buckingham's even more surprising in view of his being "in age still capable of Pleasure", and because he has experience of far greater luxury, greatness and fortune than the Emperor.

Next Etherege makes an explicit connection between the Court's real-life heroes and the rakes of the drama;

> Is it possible, I say, that your Grace should leave the Play at the Beginning of the fourth Act, when all the Spectators are in Pain to know what will become of the Hero, and what mighty Matters he is reserv'd for, that

> set out so advantageously in the first ? That a Person of your exquisite Taste, that has breathed the Air of Courts ever from your Infancy, should be content, in that Part of Life, which is most difficult to be pleased and most easie to be disgusted, to take up with the Conversation of country Parsons, a sort of People whom to my knowledge, Your Grace never much admir'd, and do penance in the nauseous Company of Lawyers, whom I am certain you abominate. (pp. 411-2)

This is the view of the country which predominates amongst the rakes in Restoration comedy. The opinion was generally shared by the Court Wits, and it required on Buckingham's part the courage of changed conviction, as well as an alteration of personal and political circumstances, to counteract such a prejudice. That Etherege himself realised the error of his own ways seems clear, but his "darling sin" of laziness,* the "noble laziness of the mind" (p. 167) which he cultivated, meant that he would not change his habits, for, though he admitted that "necessity now forces me to set up for a fop of business", he refused to be a victim of ambition. The limitations of this position were grave:

> I must confess I am a fop in my heart; ill customs influence my very senses, and I have been so used to affectation that without the help of the air of the court what is natural cannot touch me. You see what we get by being polished as we call it. (p. 309)

Etherege pursues the contrast between Buckingham's former courtly sophistication and his present plight, illustrated by the two major themes of women and drinking. On the latter, he expresses amazement that:

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* Dryden makes Etherege's laziness in writing plays a major theme of his 1686 verse letter to him. He gives the subject more political point when he writes, on 16 February 1687: "Oh, what our Monarch would encourage noble idleness by his own example as he of blessed memory did before him, for my mind misgives me that he will not much advance his affairs by stirring". (Letterbook, pp. 356-7). Cf. Savile's admission that he was "the lazyest man alive" (W.D. Cooper, ed., Savile Correspondence (1858), p. 159). Cf. also J.H. Wilson, ed., The Rochester-Savile Letters, p. 40: "'Tis not that I am the idlest Creature living, ..."

> the most polished, refined Epicure of his Age, that had regaled himself in the most exquisite Wines of Italy, Greece, and Spain, would in the last Scene of his Life, debauch his Constitution in execrable Yorkshire ale. (p. 412)

But he concludes with the compliment that Buckingham must be in earnest: "for I am certain that your Grace can act any Person better than that of a Hypocrite".

The second half of the letter contains news of Etherege's own activities in dreary Ratisbon, which leads him to make a forthright statement of his priorities:

> I always looked upon Drunkenness as an unpardonable Crime in a young fellow, who without any of these foreign Helps, has Fire enough in his Veins to enable him to do Justice to Caelia, whenever she demands a Tribute from him. In a middle-aged Man, I consider the Bottle only as subservient to the nobler Pleasure of Love, and he that would suffer himself to be so far infatuated by it, as to neglect the Pursuit of a more agreeable Game, I think deserves no Quarter from the Ladies: In old Age, indeed, when 'tis convenient very often to forget and steal from ourselves, I am of Opinion that a little Drunkenness, discreetly used, may as well contribute to our Health of Body as Tranquillity of Soul. (p. 414)

Etherege's aversions and predilections are succinctly summarised in a couplet of Dryden's in a verse letter in 1686:

> For wine to leave a whore or play[69]
> Was ne'er Your Excellence's way.

In view of his proclivities, it is not surprising that he is unhappy in Ratisbon, with its "two crying sins of both Sexes here; I mean Drunkenness in the Men, and Reservedness in the Ladies". (p. 415) His treatment of the latter has something in common with the witty exaggeration in Marvell's <u>To His Coy Mistress</u>. So too, perhaps, does his awareness of time's destruction, a theme to which his letters keep returning:

> ... since our Gayety and Vigour leaves us so soon in the lurch, since our Feebleness attacks us without giving us fair Warning, and we no sooner pass the Meridian of Life but begin to decline, its hardly worth a Lover's while to stay as long for compassing a Mistress, as Jacob did for obtaining a Wife; and without this tedious Drudgery and Application, I can assure your Grace that an Amour is not to be managed here. (p. 415)

Etherege in Ratisbon was very homesick (p. 293), and aware of having "lost the conversation of [his] friends" (p. 283). He was driven to reminisce about past exploits, as in this letter to Dorset, dated 25 July 1687:

> When you consider I have been two years from England without letting you know I am sensible you are the person in the world I am most obliged to, you will have reason to think me very ungrateful, but I know your humour so well you had rather forgive a debt than be troubled with the acknowledgement ... you and I were ne'er so bold to turn the fair Castle when she fled us into a tree, not dreaming she would grow as big as one of Evelyn's oaks, nor ourselves into bulls when we carried the two draggle-tailed nymphs one bitter, frosty night over the Thames to Lambeth ... I would gladly be a witness of the content you enjoy at Copt Hall now, and I hope to surprise you there one day, your gravity laid aside, teaching my Lord Buckhurst how to manage his hobby horse. (pp. 239-41)

Despite the last sentence, Etherege was sadly out of touch with affairs in England, and particularly the change which had occurred in the "humour" he claimed to know so well. He probably hoped for a resumption of the witty badinage of the verse letters the two had exchanged during a separation more than twenty years previously. In Dorset's case he had no occasion to express that almost pathetic gratitude which he shows to another correspondent on 19 December 1687: "such a proof of being remembered by one I love at this distance is what I have been little used to". (p. 303) In the same letter he expresses shock at the news concerning Sedley and Dorset, then indulges in a little self-congratulation (or self-justification) at their expense:

> The women need not rail at our changing; few of us have the gift to be constant to ourselves. Sir Charles Sedley sets up for good hours and sobriety; my Lord Dorset has given over variety and shuts himself up within my Lady's arms, as you inform me; ... (pp. 303-4)

This news must have made a considerable impression on him, as he returned to the theme of change a month later:

> I know you are Mr. Secretary still, but I know not whether you are still the same Lord Middleton I left you. You may be grown as temperate as Sir Charles Sedley and as uxorious as my Lord Dorset; 'twould be a fine way then to make my court to you to talk of wine and women. (p. 317)

This musing on the deceptiveness of appearances implies an awareness that his reminiscences over their amorous escapades in the letter to Dorset were in bad taste; and also perhaps he knew that he would never visit his old friend as he had half-promised. Yet despite their political differences, one likes to think that Etherege would have appreciated Dorset's masterly lampoon on James II, A Faithful Catalogue of Our Most Eminent Ninnies (1688), which has been described as "the Iliad of the genre".[70] It seems probable that, had Etherege stayed in England, he would have reconciled himself to the changed life-style of the surviving Wits.

4 Sedley: the moderate libertine

Etherege declared that Sedley "had always more wit than was enough for one man".[71] He has recently been described as "the civilest and most civilised of the Restoration court wits",[72] and the outward conventionality and inoffensiveness of his poetry is apt to obscure the subtlety of the wit which went into its creation. His pastorals, for instance, are usually fairly straightforward, and

when they are ironic they have none of the obscenity and little of the bitterness which one encounters in Rochester's treatments of the mode. In his early songs, where libertinism is advocated it is restrained and refined. In one he advises "Phillis" that they should enjoy love while it lasts, and part by mutual consent before love turns to hate:

> When we begin to want Discourse,
> And Kindness seems to tast of Force,
> As freely as we met, we'll part,
> Each one possest of their own Heart.[73]

However, there is nothing doctrinaire about his position. He does not urge variety for its own sake. In another early song he explains to "Celia" that he is no juster or better than the next, "For I would change each Hour like them,/Were not my Heart at rest". (p. 6) Yet he is not ashamed to declare that she is the only woman for him, and concludes:

> Why then should I seek farther Store,
> And still make Love a-new;
> When Change itself can give no more,
> 'Tis easie to be true. (p. 7)

There is considerable variety of attitude amongst the speakers of Sedley's poems. For example in A Pastoral Dialogue Between Thirsis and Strephon, Thirsis, by singing the praises of various ladies in exaggerated terms parodic of pastoral metaphors, seeks to tempt Strephon (who usually represnnts Rochester) from his equally inflated infatuation for one woman (pp. 3-5). But in the poem beginning "Thirsis no more against my Flame advise", Sedley defends his own right to "be in Love" much more sincerely than Strephon, and bids the inconstant Thirsis: "Pursue the vulgar easie Happiness" (p. 7). In The Complaint Thirsis is himself smitten by love for one who in the end treats him with indifference (pp. 10-11). There is no guarantee, of course, that Thirsis

represents a real man, or even that he is the same person in different poems, although all of this group of poems were written before 1672. But if the attitude of the speakers varies, Sedley's own voice generally carries the conviction of sincerity in the matter of love. This is true even when the speaker is nominally someone else, as in Orinda to Chloris (p. 9), where the advice Orinda gives about love is really Sedley's rather than that of Katherine Philips (the "Matchless Orinda").

There are early poems, it is true, where the libertine view is presented quite strongly. Clearly in the "Persuasion to enjoy" tradition is To a Devout Young Gentlewoman, where the religious metaphor works against the young lady, by equating her virtue with religious zeal. This is a technique which had been used by Butler, and which was to be put to good effect in Oldham's Satires upon the Jesuits. Just how gentle and playful Sedley's tone is can be seen if we compare his poem with the use of the same figure for much more direct satirical effect in Buckhurst's Epilogue to Tartuffe, written at about the same time:

> A man may say, without being call'd an atheist,
> There are damn'd rogues among the French and Papist,
> That fix salvation to short band and hair,
> That belch and snuffle to prolong a pray'r;
> That use, enjoy the creature,* to express
> Plain whoring, gluttony, and drunkenness;
> And, in a decent way, perform them too
> As well, nay better far, perhaps, than you;
> Whose fleshly failings are but fornication,
> We godly phrase it gospel-propagation.

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*Cf. Chapter I, p. 32.

Just as rebellion was call'd reformation.
Zeal stands but centry at the gate of sin,
Whilst all that have the word pass freely in:
Silent, and in the dark, for fear of spies,
We march, and take damnation by surprize.
There's not a roaring blade in all this town
Can go so far tow'rds hell for half-a-crown,
As I for six-pence, for I know the way; ... [74]

There is nothing so directly offensive to the devout in Sedley's poem. Rather than the excesses depicted in satires on the libertine by, for example, Oldham or Ward, carpe diem arguments are more appropriate to the genre in which he is working. The libertine argument that virtue is the province of those who are too old to enjoy "Kind Combinations" is wittily incorporated into the religious metaphor:

Old Men (till past the Pleasure) ne're
Declaim against the Sin;
'Tis early to begin to fear
The devil at Fifteen. (p. 15)

Religious terminology is employed in To Celia to disparage honour as "This Devil", and its worshippers are compared to "foolish Indians ...,/Whose whole Religion is a Sin" (p. 13). But in Her Answer Celia hopes that her offer of "Friendship so high, that I must say,/'Tis rather Love" will convince Thirsis by her example that there is some debt due to honour as well as love. One may compare this typically mild statement of the male and female attitudes to honour with Rochester's bitter conclusion in Woman's Honour that:

'Tis noble confidence in men;
In women, mean mistrustful shame. (Vieth, p. 14)

Unlike Rochester's ironically titled Platonic Lady, which is a woman's argument for enjoying all the delights preceding the fruition which orgasm brings, Sedley's The Platonick is a lover's

humble and chaste expression of submission to his mistress, which is rescued from utter conventionality only by the gentle irony of such lines as:

> I at a distance will adore your Eyes,
> As awful Persians do the Eastern Skies;
> I never will presume to think of Sex,
> Nor with gross Thoughts my deathless Love perplex. (p. 12)

The same cannot be said, however, for The Submission, spoken by what one can only describe as a "whining lover". The theme of his worship and her virtue is ironically stated in To Amaranta, whom he fell in love with at a Play-House, by means of a sexual metaphor, in the manner of Rochester's mock-pastorals.

There is no doubt about the sincerity of Constancy, almost certainly addressed to his mistress, Ann Aysoough, whom he had met about 1670. Its accent on the marriage of true minds perhaps owes something to the Cambridge Platonists' description of reason as "the candle of the Lord", and this passage may be compared to Rochester's very different use of the same image in his Satyr:*

> For though thy Beauty first allur'd my Sight,
> Now I consider it but as the Light
> That led me to the Treasury of thy Mind,
> Whose inward Vertue in that Feature shin'd. (p. 11)

If Fancy tied the knot, Reason made it fast:

> So fast that time, although it may disarm
> Thy lovely Face, my Faith can never harm;
> And Age deluded, when it comes, will find
> My Love removed, and to thy Soul assign'd.

This is how the final version of the poem appears in his Miscellaneous Works (1702), the year after his death. The version which was published in A Collection of Poems, ... By several Persons (for Hobart Kemp, 1672) had an additional four lines, which were omitted from the Works (1702) in case they might give offence:

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*See above, p. 203.

The passion I have now shall ne're grow less,
No, though thy own fair self it should oppress;
I could e'en hazard my Eternity,
Love but again, and 'twill a Heaven be. (p. xxix)

Another example of alteration on the grounds of ethics, as distinct from considerations of artistic improvement, occurs in To Chloris. Its concluding lines refer to Sedley's wife, who, though still alive in 1672, had been insane for many years, and was by this time being cared for in a convent at Ghent.[75] The poem is addressed to Ann Ayscough:

My Hand, alas, is no more mine,
Else it had long ago been thine;
My Heart I give thee, and we call
No Man unjust that parts with all. (p. 27)

The opening describes how the relationship began as just another seduction, but how Sedley became genuinely captivated. The 1672 version contained a further two lines, which were suppressed in the 1702 edition:

What a Priest says moves not the mind,
Souls are by love, not words, combin'd. (p. xxix)

By 1700, when the revisions were made, Sedley had changed considerably from the Court Wit, whose escapades with Buckhurst and Rochester had been the talk of the town - such as the notorious affair at Oxford Kate's Cock Tavern, recorded by Pepys and Wood.[76]

Ann Ayscough's influence was largely responsible for the reform in Sedley's manners. Pinto says: "He seems to have withdrawn from the brilliant but profligate circle of Buckingham and the Countess of Shrewsbury, of which he was a prominent member in 1670 and 1671, and to have passed his time in comparative retirement for many years".[77] In April 1672 he went through a form of marriage

with Ann, which occasioned Mulgrave's gibe, in An Essay Upon Satire, that his "mistresses are kept too long". This ill-natured work, which was circulated in manuscript towards the end of 1679, also mocks Sedley's reform:

> But sure we all mistake this pious man,
> Who mortifies his person all he can:
> What we uncharitably take for sin,
> Are only rules of this odd Capuchin.

The implication is that his reform is a sham. The portrait begins:

> And little Sid, for simile renown'd,
> Pleasure hath always sought but never found:
> Though all his thoughts on wine and women fall,
> His are so bad, sure, he ne'er thinks at all.

And it ends:

> Expecting supper is his great delight,
> He toils all day but to be drunk at night.[78]

But there is no reason to give credence to Mulgrave's malicious sneers.

Sedley's reformation was further precipitated when, while playing tennis with Etherege and Fleetwood Shepherd in 1680, he sustained what appears to have been a fractured skull when the roof collapsed on them. Etherege was also seriously injured. In March 1686 Sedley was ill again, so gravely that on 13 April he was reported dead.[79] The effect of this near escape on Sedley moved Charles Montague to write a poem mocking his patron's "conversion" (which he had the tact not to publish), from which it appears that Sedley himself had felt called upon to defend the Trinity in a poem. Montague addresses the following couplet to the Dog and Partridge, a favourite haunt of the Wits:

> Lesse were thy joys and expectations crost
> In Strephons Death, then now when Siddeys lost.[80]

Sedley destroyed his defence of Trinitarian theology, and remained a sceptic in religious matters for the rest of his life. His attitude is best exemplified by two or three short translations. Out of Lycophron, which probably dates from the 1690's, when a number of similar pieces of his were published in the Gentleman's Journal, shows his doubt, and the course of action which he believed should follow from it:

What shall become of Man so wise,
When he dies ?
None can tell
Whither he goes to Heaven or Hell;
Or after a few Moments dear,
He disappear,
And at last,
Perish entirely like a Beast:
But Women, Wine and Mirth we know;
Are all the Joys he has below:
Let us then ply those Joys we have,
'Tis vain to think beyond the Grave;
Out of our reach the Gods have laid
Of Time to come th' Event,
And laugh to see the Fools afraid,
Of what the Knaves invent. (p. 40)

Sedley has expanded the four lines of the Alexandrian dramatist into a sustained sceptical statement, followed by an invitation to responsible hedonism, justified by the inclusion of a set of rather Epicurean deities who even go so far as to laugh at mankind for being so superstitious as to believe in a code of behaviour invented by the orthodox, who are here styled "Knaves".

Though more literal than the Lycophron, his translation of Martial's Epigram 77 of Book 8, To Liber, is far longer than Ben Jonson's version, and stresses the hedonistic elements more alluringly. But a better indication of his doubt is given in Out of French, perhaps suggested by some French lines published in 1673.

More condensed and poignant than their model, they might serve as an epitaph to the earlier phase of Sedley's career:

> Dear Friend, I fear my Heart will break;
> In t'other World I scarce believe,
> In this I little pleasure take:
> That my whole Grief thou may'st conceive;
> Cou'd not I Drink more than I Whore,
> By Heaven, I wou'd not live an Hour. (p. 45)

Although Sedley never achieved a positive faith, and remained sceptical about conventional piety, he was equally sceptical about denying religion altogether. In To Quintus, a Shakespearean sonnet perhaps suggested by Martial's Epigram 41 of Book 1, and first published in 1702, he comprehensively denounces atheism, Epicurean materialism, and the behaviour associated with the adherents of these systems:

> Thou art an Atheist, Quintus, and a Wit,
> Thinkst all was of self-moving Attoms made,
> Religion only for the Vulgar fit,
> Priests Rogues and Preaching their deceitful Trade;
> Wilt drink, whore, fight, blaspheme, damn, curse and swear:
> Why wilt thou swear, by G--, if there be none ?
> And if there be, thou shou'd'st his Vengeance fear:
> Methinks this Huffing might be let alone;
> 'Tis thou art free, Mankind besides a Slave,
> And yet a Whore may lead thee by the Nose,
> A drunken Bottle, and a flatt'ring Knave,
> A mighty Prince, Slave to thy dear Soul's Foes,
> Thy Lust, thy Rage, Ambition and thy Pride;
> He that serves G--, need nothing serve beside. (pp. 49-50)

Though uneven, this is impressive in its force, and in the positive nature of its final statement.

Sedley comes near to a positive course also in To Nysus:

> How shall we please this Age ? If in a Song
> We put above six Lines, they count it long;
> If we contract it to an Epigram,
> As deep the dwarfish Poetry they damn;

> If we write Plays, few see above an Act,
> And those lewd Masks, or noisie Fops distract:
> Let us write Satyr then, and at our ease
> Vex th' ill-natur'd Fools we cannot please. (p. 52)

Sedley included a disclaimer with these lines when they were published in the Gentleman's Journal (November 1692), effectively saying that he himself had no cause to complain. Perhaps this lack of personal incentive explains why he wrote little satire of his own. About the nearest he comes is his Advice to the Old Beaux (1693) to: "repent your former Sins,/Not study their Increase"; (p. 35) - advice which he apparently followed himself. The manner of his death indicates that he had achieved an Epicurean calm: Davenant reports that he died "like a philosopher without fear or superstition".[81]

The Happy Pair: or, a Poem on Matrimony (1702), which was almost certainly Sedley's last work, expresses a refined Epicureanism. His "happy Man is measur'd by the Mind" (p. 70), espousing the Epicurean pleasures of rest. The poem is an extended attack on the Cowleyan vices, particularly their effect on the marital relationship, in the by now standard heroic couplets of neoclassical poetry. Unlike the sensuous treatment of this theme in the Song ("See! Hymen comes") (1692), it is directly didactic, virtually the only thing of its kind that any of the Wits wrote, which is in itself a measure of how far the climate had changed since their heyday. The poem is certainly in tune with the new vogue for sentiment, not to say wishful thinking. It closes with an idealised picture of the happy pair. They are "a Rustick Couple", who "love, and know not what Ambition means" (p. 73). Although

Sedley's happy pair look mainly backward towards Cowley (and, dare one say, Milton), they also look forward to eighteenth century developments of the theme, as described by Maren-Sofie Røstvig in the second volume of her book The Happy Man.

Many of the influences and motifs noted in Chapter III are apparent in the poem. For example, like Lucretian detached spectators, the pair remain impassive in the face of both natural and man-made disasters:

> See how unmov'd they at all Changes stand,
> Shipwrecks at Sea, and Earthquakes on the Land:
> The Fraud of Courts, the Knavish Toil of Clowns,
> A Monarch's Favour, or his pointed Frowns,
> Concern them not; ... (p. 73)

They differ from the Lucretian spectator in that they are not alone, and they differ from the hedonistic lovers of the Restoration in being perfectly content with mutual constancy:

> Each to the other proves a solid Bliss,
> Rich in themselves no want of Happiness.

The variety and transience of the Restoration lovers' passion has been replaced by the faithfulness and mutual dependence of the married couple. In the passage which concludes the poem, "stinking Sense" is rejected in favour of the soul. An unfortunate pathetic effect is produced by the word "Bottom", preceding lines which attempt to elevate the happy couple to the level of angels:

> Like Aegypt, in whose Land all Plenty grows,
> Each others Bottom is their best Repose.
> When clam'rous Storms, and pitchy Tempests rise,
> Cheek clings to Cheek, and swimming Eyes to Eyes:
> When jarring Winds and dreadful Thundres Roar,
> It serves to make 'em Press, and Love the more.
> Immortal Beings thus themselves Cajol,
> Spurn stinking Sense, and feed upon the Soul.

Here let us leave them bathing in pure Joy,
  Whom envious Man, nor Fate can e'er destroy.
Here let 'em live to share all Wealth and Pow'r,
  As Greatness can't love less, they can't love more.
To the Divinest State of things they drive,
  Like Pilgrim-Angels, on the Earth they live,
Kind Nature gave them, Fortune bore no part,
  Love join'd their Souls, and Heav'n seal'd each Heart.

The effect of this is so ludicrous that one is tempted to read it as a parody. It inevitably invites comparison with the ending of Paradise Lost, which succeeds by virtue of (among other things) the way in which Adam and Eve set out with dignity to tackle the difficulties, as well as the joys, of life on Earth together, as wayfaring, warfaring Christians. Sedley's "Pilgrim-Angels" are devoid of any such credibility. Indeed, it is very rare for anything approaching realism to invade the realm of the extravagant invocation of paradise. Aphra Behn's introduction of venereal disease into hers is exceptional by her own standards, as well as alien to the genre, which, except when being used for satirical ends by parodists such as Ames, portrays a soft primitivist Eden in which the serpent is conspicuous by his absence.

Sedley's poem is not an epic, or even a mock epic, and to compare it with Paradise Lost is both unfair and fruitless. It is more appropriate to see it in the tradition of the retirement ode, where the retirement, like Cowley's, is necessitated by the corruption of the court, or the city. Sedley's main purpose is similarly to attack the vices of man in society, which is more difficult to do by Cowley's method of idealising the retirement than by Juvenalian railing against the vices. If Sedley achieves little more than what appears to the reader to be mere escapist fantasising, it is

because he attempts the more difficult of the two courses. He wants to present a picture of ideal love between two people. Human nature being corrupt as it is, love in normal human society is fraught with danger, if not actually impossible, because its motives are always open to question. This is symbolised in the poem by a series of exempla, and by describing love in society with metaphors drawn from the animal kingdom and mechanistic processes. In contrast to the world of business, which causes the corruption of love:

> Love, like a cautious fearful Bird, ne'er builds,
> But where the Place Silence and Calmness yields:
> He slily flies to Copses, where he finds
> The snugging Woods secure from Blasts and Winds. (p. 72)

Given that Love's abode is the "low Grove", retirement is necessary to experience it. Its pursuit becomes nothing less than an attempt to recapture the state described at the beginning of the poem, man's innocence before the Fall, "When free from Sin the noble Mortal strove/To Rival God in his return of Love". (p. 65) Before such sins as pride and avarice were known, then man was God-like indeed:

> Then then the new Inhabitant was blest,
> Ease watched his Heart, and Peace secur'd his Breast;
> No Earthy Thought tainted his gen'rous Mind,
> That World th' Almighty gave him, he declin'd;
> His God-like Image made him upwards move;
> He liv'd below while his Soul dwelt above. (p. 65)

In this earthly paradise love flourished:

> With heat of Love he flam'd upon his Mate,
> And on the green Swarth without dowry sate:
> Circling her snowy Neck, he sought her Heart;
> A fi'ry Lover, free from Fraud, or Art.

It was this world, where Nature was not yet debauched by Art, where the business ethic of fraud was still unknown, and which was characterised by the Epicurean pleasures of rest, that Sedley attempted, nostalgically, to recapture in The Happy Pair. Read thus, it is not altogether inconsistent with the main body of his work, and with the philosophy of aristocratic libertinism which the Wits had posed as an alternative to the middle-class work ethic. Nevertheless, Sedley was associated with the new sentimentality. In February 1698 he was appointed to a committee charged to bring in a bill against profaneness, immorality and debauchery, which resulted in the Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness (9 and 10 William III c. 32). Sedley's volte face elicited a gibe from Defoe in Reformation of Manners (1702), the most thorough satirical indictment of the hypocrisy of the "new morality".[82]

CHAPTER V SATIRICAL USES OF LIBERTINISM

1 John Oldham

Oldham, like Rochester, had a puritan upbringing, and he seems to have reacted against it too, though not so spectacularly. As with Rochester, and even more strongly with Wycherley, one is aware of a duality in his attitude. Despite his professed dedication to satire as a corrective, there is often the feeling, particularly in his earlier work, that he is moved less by positive moral values than by a fascination with the aberrations he is supposedly attacking, an ambivalence similar to that in Webster and Tourneur. Rochester's privileged position had enabled him to make the experiment of living a life of pleasure according to the precepts of Hobbes, Epicurus and other masters. Yet it is arguable that even he never fully rid himself of the guilt which this aroused in him, and that his recognition that only religion could provide him with true spiritual happiness represented his return to a fold from which in a sense he had never altogether escaped. In Oldham's case there was no question of embarking on a libertine course of behaviour: this was precluded anyhow by the need to earn a living as a schoolmaster, a position which required certain moral standards. Oldham's flirtation with libertinism was carried on clandestinely. The obscene verses resulting from his association with the Wits, though he never published them, later engendered remorse. After his conversion he wrote a number of Juvenalian denunciations of vice, in some of which, one feels, the vices are unnecessarily dwelt upon. This unpleasantness is mellowed in the Horatian imitations, and Oldham's poetry had lost much of its earlier harshness by the time he died, of smallpox in 1683, at the age of thirty.

The notoriety of the Wits had aroused Oldham's interest as early as 1675, and he refers to them in his earliest extant poem, his ode To the Memory of Mr. Charles Morwent, which was published in his Remains.[1] Oldham felt deeply the loss of his friend, who died on 25 August, aged twenty, the summer after both young men had left Oxford. In the manner of Cowley, Oldham contrasts the virtues of Morwent with the vices which vainly tempt him:

> Fond Pleasure, whose soft Magick oft beguiles
> Raw unexperienc'd Souls,
> And with smooth Flattery cajoles,
> Could ne'er ensnare thee with her Wiles,
> Or make thee Captive to her soothing Smiles.
> In vain that Pimp of Vice assay'd to please,
> In hope to draw thee to its rude Embrace. (stanza 26, p. 291)

The ambivalence discernible here may be explained by the dramatic need to make Pleasure appear tempting, so as to demonstrate Morwent's virtue in resisting "that Pimp of Vice". The same could be said of the reference to the Wits in the next stanza. Yet one senses a certain admiration underlying his surface condemnation of them:

> The mad Capricio's of the doting Age
> Could ne'er, in the same Frenzy, Thee engage;
> But mov'd Thee rather with a gen'rous Rage.
> Gallants, who their high Breeding prize,
> Know only by their Gallanture and Vice,
> Whose Talent is to court a fashionable Sin,
> And act some fine Transgression with a jaunty Mien,
> May by such Methods hope the Vogue to win.
> Let those gay Fops, who deem
> Their Infamous Accomplishment,
> Grow scandalous to get Esteem;
> And by Disgrace strive to be Eminent. (st. 27, p. 292)

Morwent was guided by virtue, vice being contrary to his nature:

> All its Attempts were ineffectual found;
> Heav'n fenc'd thy Heart with its own Mound,
> And forc'd the Tempter still from that forbidden Ground. (p. 292)

In another early Pindaric ode, To the Memory of that worthy Gentleman, Mr. Harman Atwood, written in February 1677, Oldham speaks of:

> The Men of Sense, who in Confederacy join,
> To damn Religion ... (st. 7, p. 318)

By contrast, Atwood, on account of his piety, is:

> Exalted far above the vain Attacks of Wit,
> And all that vile, gay, lewd Buffoons can bring,
> Who try by little Railleries to ruin it [religion] ,
> And jeer't into an unreguarded, poor, defenceless thing.
> (p. 317)

More than six months before this, Oldham had recorded his ambivalent attitude towards Rochester himself, by satirising (or celebrating) him in the "Pindarique" written at Croydon in July 1676, which was later published as the Satyr against Vertue. Rochester, at the height of his notoriety, had that March been "canonised" as Dorimant in The Man of Mode, a part which celebrated his wit and past glories. Of the "many odd Adventures and Frollicks" to which "a disposition to extravagant Mirth"[2] had led him, Oldham selects for this occasion one of the most famous. A letter dated 26 June 1675 reports that:

> My Lord Rochester in a frolick after a rant did yesterday beat doune the dyill which stood in the midle of the Privie [Gard]ing, which was esteemed the rarest in Europ.[3]

Aubrey's account further elucidates the incident:

> The ... dialls ... in the garden at Whitehall ... were one night ... broken all to pieces (for they were of glass spheres) by the earl of Rochester, lord Buckhurst, Fleetwood Shephard, etc., comeing in from their revells. 'What!' said the earl of Rochester, 'doest thou stand here to [ ] time ?' Dash they fell to worke.[4]

The fair copy of the Satyr in Oldham's notebook is headed "Suppos'd to be spoken by a Court-Hector at Breaking of ye Dial in Privy-Garden",[5] and this is confirmed in another manuscript copy of the poem.[6] This information that the Hector was Rochester was suppressed

in all the early editions of Oldham's poems. Even the pirated 1679 printing of the Satyr has only: "Supposed to be spoken by a Town-Hector. Pindarique. In Imitation of Mr. Cowley".[7] There are many reasons why Oldham would not have wished the original identification to be made public, several years after the poem was written. By this time he was rather ashamed of its crudeness. He only agreed to publish an authorised version at all because the pirate's mangling had made it appear more of a satire on the author himself than an attack on vice. The ridiculous figure of the Hector would be considered particularly inappropriate in view of Rochester's recent death as a convert, an event which had occasioned sincere tributes, including Oldham's own Bion, as well as much pious propaganda.

The knowledge that the poem was supposed to be spoken by Rochester would have added to its enjoyment by the friends among whom it was designed to be passed in manuscript. But although it was appropriate to his original conception of the poem, Oldham probably felt that to name a particular target would detract from the efficacy of the general satire to which he was professing allegiance in the Satires upon the Jesuits (with which the Satyr was published) and in other poems at this time. Moreover, although Rochester projected himself as a libertine spokesman in some of his own early satires, the Hector of the Satyr seems to draw more on the popular conception of Rochester as the stereotypical libertine, the Nero and Don John of heroic drama. This was not a view of Rochester which anyone who had actually met him would be likely to

propagate. And at some time during his three-year stay at Croydon Oldham did, as Wood informs us, become "acquainted with that noted poet for obscenity and blasphemy, John, Earl of Rochester".[8] Wood also records that Rochester, for his part, "seemed much delighted in the mad ranting, and debauched specimens of poetry of this author Oldham". Some of Oldham's writings almost justify Wood's opinion, which, however, appears to have been formed only on the basis of published items.

The tradition that Oldham was visited at Whitgift School in Croydon (where he was usher) by Rochester, Dorset, Sedley and others, who had been impressed by some of his verses they had seen in manuscript, first appears in print in the "Memoir" in the 1722 edition of his Works.[9] The poem they saw was probably the Satyr against Vertue, and the visit may have been the first of many meetings between Oldham and the Wits. The Croydon area was certainly familiar to Rochester and his circle, for the fatal stabbing of Downs in June 1676 had occurred at nearby Epsom. Furthermore, there are strong suggestions that several of Oldham's compositions while at Croydon were intended for the eyes of the Wits, and some of these indicate that he may have attended their debauched gatherings. This fragment from his notebook, for example, seems from its contents to be designed for some such audience:

> Another strait did in ye talk succeed ...
> Studied he was in Sodom (which by heart
> Had got & cou'd rehearse in every Part
> And many of its filthy scenes had tried
> And seen them acted ore or els he lied
> Much of L'Escole de Filles was mention'd there
> And more of our great witty bawdy Peer,
> Something of Aretine's fame he had heard speak ...[10]

"Our great witty bawdy Peer" is of course Rochester, who is referred to in the same affectionate terms elsewhere in the manuscript.[11] Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery (1684), which has been attributed to both Rochester and Christopher Fishbourne,[12] a member of the inns of court, boasts in its Prologue that: "It is the most debauch'd heroick piece/That e're was wrote".[13] Dorset, in A Faithful Catalogue of our Most Eminent Ninnies (1688) refers to it in a way which suggests that he expected his readers to recall its spectacular satire on the Court.[14] Aretino's name occurs frequently in Oldham's notebook and in libertine writings generally,[15] as a typical accompaniment to debauches. His sonnets were written earlier in the century to accompany a series of "postures" engraved by Giulio Romano. L'Escole des Filles (1655) features in the first recorded purchase of a "dirty book" - by Samuel Pepys, who subsequently burnt it.[16] Elsewhere in his notebook Oldham drafted the opening to what was to have been a companion piece to the lines on the author of Sodom, a satire, in Latin, on another well-known contemporary piece of erotica, Nicholas Chorier's Satyra sotadica (1660).[17] There is another reference to Sodom in the fragment entitled A Vision, much of which was used in the first of the Satires upon the Jesuits. Here the Jesuits' obscene gatherings are described in the same terms as those of the Wits:

> Here Sodom's lewdness, many a filthy scene,
> Outdon by draughts of modern Aretine ...[18]

The tone of all these passages is one of prurient glee rather than outrage or disgusted condemnation.

One of the principal butts of these witty gatherings was undoubtedly King Charles. Rochester's excursions against the King tended to contain much playful satire on his indolence (an integral part of Epicureanism), with an added dash of ironic patriotism. In A Satyr on Charles II, for example, the comparison with Louis marginally favours Charles:

> Him no ambition moves to get renown
> Like the French fool, that wanders up and down
> Starving his people, hazarding his crown. (Vieth, p. 60)

But the lampoon becomes coarser, and in the final couplet Rochester is forthright enough about his feelings:

> All monarchs I hate, and the thrones they sit on,
> From the hector of France to the cully of Britain. (p. 61)

Some of the lines in this and other satires on the King must have expressed standing jokes; for even Rochester's "His scepter and his prick are of a length" (p. 60) was not entirely original when it was written in January 1674.* A similar line appears in Sodom, which was probably written for the benefit of some such group as The Ballers, and certainly the most thorough of the satires on Charles and his Court. King Bolloxinion boasts that his nation will be free, ruled by love, not fear;

> My pintle only shall my scepter be.
> My laws shall act more pleasure than command,
> And with my prick I'll govern all the land.[19]

Sodom is a dramatic equivalent of Oldham's Satyr against Vertue. The King makes this explicit when, having just rewarded a particularly lustful woman for her sexual initiative, he declares:

> I'll encourage virtue whilst I live.

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* Cf. "His pr--- then prov'd as useless as his chain", from The Fourth Advice (1667), l. 136 (POAS 1, p. 146).

In Sodom under King Bolloxinion, virtue is its opposite: the inversion of moral values is even more complete than it is in Oldham's Satyr, since it is established by dramatic as well as rhetorical means.[20]

It is in the context of a satire on King Charles, in the manner of Sodom, written for a gathering of the Wits, that one should view the mock-heroic Sardanapalus. The opening stanza is very obviously intended in this vein:

> Happy Great Prince, & so much happier thou
> In that thou thine own Happiness didst Know
> . . . . . .
> Restless Ambition ne'er usurp'd thy Mind
> To vex thy Pleasures & disturb Mankind:
> With gallant height of Soul, thou didst contemn
> That Bauble, Honour, & that Geugau Fame
> And all the undershrievalties of Life, not worth a name. } 21

Soon the almost obligatory "scepter" joke makes its appearance:

> Methinks I see thee now in full Seraglio stand
> With Love's great Scepter in thy hand - ... (f. 129r)

Many of the other ideas are also present in Rochester's "scepter" lampoon.* The King's laziness is hinted at; he is said to be free from ambition, one of the vices which Cowley, Oldham's master, had attacked; and as a libertine he rejects "That Bauble, Honour". In addition, the echo of Dryden's Aureng-Zebe in the last line of this passage indicates that Oldham is being weaned from Cowley's influence, and foreshadows the direction he would pursue to produce the Satires upon the Jesuits. The use of the couplet and alexandrine also mark a considerable advance over the pindarics of the Satyr against Vertue.

The satire becomes rather more personal in the second half of the opening stanza, where first the King's choice of alternative

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*See above, Chapter IV, p. 195.

activity is praised, but when this turns out to be an obsession the compliment is seen to be backhanded:

> C--t thy sole bus'ness & affair of State -
> And C--t the only Field to make thee great. (f. 128^{r})

The repetition of "C--t" in every line at this point has little effect except to irritate the reader, but this is the only really objectionable element in the poem. More interesting is the fourth stanza, where the Court, which Cowley had sought to avoid, is ironically represented as a retreat from the cares of state:

> Thus did'st thou spend thy Days in blest retreat
> Free from ye Troubles & Impertinence of State
> Excempt from all the vain Anxiety & Fear
> Which other Scepter'd Wretches wear. (f. 129^{v})

The King's freedom from care extends also to care about his neglected and mutinous people, since his sole concern is love. He is also immune from satire:

> In vain the Railing Satyrs of ye Age
> Attack'd thee with Poetic rage
> They spread their loose lampoons in vain
> And with lewd Wit, they sacred Pintle did profane. (f. 130^{r})

This seems to be a joke at the expense of the King's good humour in the face of lampoons on him by wits such as Oldham and Rochester. But it is also necessary from the point of view of the poem's "plot" that:

> Pego within kept awfull and regardless state
> And smil'd at all the Terrors of approaching Fate. (f. 130^{r})

Finally attacked by his rebellious subjects, the King resolves to die fighting, declaring that:

> This my sole Glory shall recorded be
> No Monarch ever fu-k'd or Dy'd like me.

Accordingly, he builds a funeral pyre for himself, his chosen partner, and a hundred attendants of each sex, which he orders to

be lit at the crucial moment. The mock-heroic pyrotechnics describing the death of "Lechery's great Martyr" parody the ecstasies supposedly experienced by martyrs on being burnt. These lines are an extreme example of Oldham's practice, observable in some of his other poems dating from this time,[22] of relating sexual activity in the language of religion. The equation of zeal with lust was an established element in the lampoon tradition, following Butler.* Oldham uses the technique to greatest effect in the Satires upon the Jesuits, whose peculiar force is derived from the rant of heroic drama, as opposed to the crude humour of lampoon.

In defence of Oldham's obscene poems, it must be said that Sardanapalus has never been published, and Upon the Author of a play called Sodom did not see the light of day until this century.[23] They were certainly never intended for publication. Nor, indeed, was the Satyr against Vertue, which was printed without Oldham's permission - and misunderstood, despite the "Apology" appended to it. The anonymous author of A Pindarique Ode, Describing the Excellency of True Virtue, With Reflexions on the Satyr against Vertue (1679) evidently overlooked the Apology, or dismissed it. Yet he cannot be blamed for misunderstanding the Satyr. As I have indicated, Oldham's duality gives some of his works considerable ambivalence. In this case, he felt it necessary to write a Counterpart to the Satyr, to prove that his intention, as stated in the Apology, had been "not to flatter Vice, but to traduce" (I, p. 94), and that he himself was a true satirist and upholder of virtue.

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*See for example, Rochester's Farewell (1680), ll. 164-83 (Poems on Affairs of State (Yale ed.), 2, p. 225).

Whatever its genesis may have been, the Satyr is quite a tour de force. Despite its ludicrous exaggeration of the libertine code, there is a real sense in which Oldham is making a sincere plea for some of the freedoms, which, advocated by the ridiculous "Hector", the reader condemns. Oldham's personal attitude to libertinism will become clearer when the rest of his work has been considered; one might say that his position lies somewhere between that of the Satyr's Hector and the Cowleyan attacker of vice in the Counterpart In Person of the Author. Meanwhile, the Satyr is important in at least two other respects: it is a significant milestone in Oldham's poetic career, itself a crucial chapter in the development of English verse satire; but of more direct relevance to this thesis is its content, an oversimplified caricature of libertinism which remains unrivalled in verse, though it spawned several imitations. Indeed, most of the opening stanza has been quoted in an earlier chapter, to aid definition.* It is instructive to turn again to the poem now.

The first stanza ends with theriophilic arguments, by now familiar from Rochester and others:

> More happy Brutes! who the great Rule of Sense observe,
> And ne'er from their first Charter swerve.
> Happy! whose lives are merely to enjoy,
> And feel no Stings of Sin, which may their Bliss annoy.
> Still unconcern'd at Epithets of Ill, or Good,
> Distinctions unadult'rate Nature never understood. (I, p. 80)

As an undeveloped statement, this lacks the seductively convincing effect of the sustained argument for the superiority of the beasts

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*See Chapter II above, pp.95-6.

which had characterised Rochester's Satyr against Mankind, or which Oldham would advance in The Eighth Satire of Monsieur Boileau Imitated. The same goes for the phrase "the great Rule of Sense", which is Rochester's "right reason". The other elements in this extract are at once traditional and original. The beasts are innocent of the pangs of conscience which men suffer when they sin, because they are in the ideal state of man before the Fall, when nature was "unadult'rate". Whereas man must distinguish between good and evil or suffer the consequences, for the beasts such ethical concepts do not exist. The only way humans, not being able to return to the state of innocence before the Fall, can achieve the beasts' happy position, is by adopting a system of complete moral relativity. No real-life libertine, not even Rochester, had seriously advocated such a position.

In the second stanza of the Satyr against Vertue the Hector, echoing Milton's "Hence, loathéd Melancholy", banishes Virtue from "our goodly Isle" to "some unfruitful, unfrequented Land", where she may "extend her rigorous command". Then a sustained mercantile metaphor, which runs through the whole poem, makes its first appearance:

> There, where illib'ral Nature's Niggardice
> Has set a Tax on Vice,
> Where the lean barren Region does enhance
> The Worth of dear Intemperance,
> And for each pleasurable Sin exacts Excise.
> We (thanks to Fate) more cheaply can offend,
> And want no tempting Luxuries,
> No good convenient sinning Opportunities,
> Which Nature's Bounty could bestow, or Heaven's Kindness lend.
> (I, p. 81)

The economic argument for consumption merges here with a kind of geographical determinism, when the libertine attributes his "bargain" in sin, and the wide availability of its raw materials, to "Fate".

The Hector banishes Virtue to the skies to "Converse with Saints, and holy Folks above". Apart from its blasphemy, his disparagement of their preference for "lazy ease", which "affords them nothing else to do" but consort with virtue, can be seen as a rejection of the true Epicurean ideal of the pleasures of rest, in favour of the pleasures of motion which he and his fellow Epicures embrace. The dichotomy is essentially between mental and physical pleasures, those of the soul being weighed against those of the body. Virtue is to him:

> ... an hard, unpracticable good,
> Too difficult for Flesh and Blood:
> Were I all Soul like them, perhaps I'd learn to practise thee.
> (p. 82)

The contrast between these two exaggerated positions owes much to the popular tradition of Epicure versus Stoic.

The third stanza opens with a set of over-ingenious but revealing insults to Virtue:

> Virtue! thou solemn grave Impertinence,
> Abhorr'd by all the Men of Wit and Sense.
> Thou damn'd Fatigue! that clog'st Life's Journey here,
> Though thou no Weight of Wealth or Profit bear;
> Thou puling, fond, Green-sickness of the Mind:
> Thou mak'st us prove to our own selves unkind,
> Whereby we Coals, and Dirt for Diet choose,
> And Pleasure's better Food refuse. (p. 82)

The Hector is here identified with the rakes of Restoration comedy, to whom the phrase "Men of Wit and Sense" was often applied. One

of their characteristics, impertinence, is mischievously applied to Virtue itself. But in castigating Virtue for being a burden, to be carried through life without producing any "Weight of Wealth or Profit" in return, the Hector is again applying the metaphor from the incipient science of economics, and thus embodies elements of the Swiftian parody of the Projector in A Modest Proposal, who is incapable of seeing any considerations other than those of profit and loss. As a materialist, the Hector insists on profit, or at least a return on his investment. As an egoistical hedonist, he equates profit with pleasure, like Butler's "Modern Politician",* prefiguring Mandeville's arguments for luxury and spending in all senses. He echoes Rochester's satirist's attack on false reason in representing austere virtue as a disease, which, like a disproportion of one of the four humours, "makes us prove to our own selves unkind" by unnaturally restraining our natural impulses. The use of the disgusting image to satirise hypocrisy is perhaps developed from Cleveland, or from Butler's Dildoides, which says of "This Image of the lewd Priapus":

> Green Sickness+ Girls will soon Adore him,
> And wickedly fall down before him.[24]

The image is much more fully elaborated, ostensibly for the same purpose, in On the Author of a Play call'd Sodom, where part of the relevant lines read:

> Thy Muse has got the Flow'rs, and they ascend,
> As in some Green-sick Girl, at upper end.[25]

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*See Chapter I above, pp. 67-8.

+Cf. Butler's Character, "A Duke of Bucks", Chapter IV, p. 185 above. This image, though common, makes the attribution of Dildoides to Butler a likely one.

In the fourth stanza another traditional argument is turned on its head. Opponents of the idea of progress (broadly, the "ancients") argued that the history of mankind represented a progressive deterioration in his physical and mental powers. The Hector shows himself to be uncompromisingly "modern" when he says, in effect, that man in this day and age is in a more enviable situation than his ancestors. Man's knowledge and worship of Virtue was appropriate only:

> ... in the World's rude untaught Infancy,
> Before it had outgrown its childish Innocence,
> Before it had arriv'd at Sense,
> Or reach'd the Man-hood, and Discretion of Debauchery:
> Known in these ancient godly duller times,
> When crafty Pagans had engross'd all Crimes:
> When Christian Fools were obstinately good,
> Nor yet their Gospel-Freedom understood.
> Tame easy Fops! who could so prodigally bleed,
> To be thought Saints, and dye a Calendar with red:
> No prudent Heathen e'er seduc'd could be,
> To suffer Martyrdom for Thee. (p. 84)

This is an extension of the argument of the first stanza, where the beasts were envied because they felt "no Stings of Sin", and where good and evil were "Distinctions unadult'rate Nature never understood". Now the Hector praises "crafty Pagans" for similar reasons, in contrast to the "Christian Fools", who have not yet been liberated by a discovery of their "Gospel-Freedom" or Christian Liberty. The ironic use of such phrases, from the sectaries' own vocabulary, had been widened by Butler and other satirists to include persuasions as different from the Puritan "Saints" as the Latitudinarians.*

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*See Chapter I, p.22 above.

Such lines as Oldham's perhaps gave Dryden the hint for his much more subtly sophisticated allusion to the theme in the opening lines of Absalom and Achitophel.

That the Hector was Rochester adds a dramatic dimension to the irony in the fifth stanza, the theme of which is the insincere libertine repentance. It would clearly have been in bad taste publicly to attribute to Rochester the feelings which the Hector expresses here, a compelling reason why Oldham would not wish the poem to be published. Youth, argues the Hector, has no time for virtue, the pursuit of which befits only the old and infirm:

> Let fumbling Age be grave, and wise,
> And Virtue's poor contemn'd Idea prize,
> Who never knew, or now are past the Sweets of Vice;
> While we whose active Pulses beat
> With lusty Youth, and vigorous Heat,
> Can all their Beards, and Morals too despise,
> While my plump Veins are fill'd with Lust and Blood,
> Let not one Thought of her intrude,
> Or dare approach my Breast,
> But know 'tis all possest
> By a more welcome Guest;
> And know, I have not yet the Leisure to be good.
> If ever unkind Destiny
> Shall force long Life on me;
> If e'er I must the Curse of Dotage bear;
> Perhaps I'll dedicate those Dregs of Time to her,
> And come with Crutches her most humble Votary,
> When sprightly Vice retreats from hence, *
> And quits the Ruins of decaying Sense;
> She'll serve to usher in a fair Pretence,
> And varnish with her Name a well-dissembled Impotence,
> When Phthysick, Rheums, Catarrhs, and Palsies seize,
> And all the Bill of Maladies,
> Which Heaven to punish over-living Mortals sends;
> Then let her enter with the numerous Infirmities,
> Her self the greatest Plague, which Wrinkles and grey Hairs attends. (pp. 85-6)

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*By quoting the phrase which Hobbes uses to describe memory in Leviathan Chapter 13, the Hector brands himself unmistakably as a Hobbist.

The argument, already familiar to us, was to become a commonplace of libertine writings. I have quoted the stanza in full to demonstrate the loose, rambling style which the pindaric form encouraged. Oldham had already outgrown it by the time the Satyr was printed: the Satires upon the Jesuits, in the same volume display tighter discipline and control, as well as a Juvenalian intensity.

The sixth stanza compares Virtue unfavourably with "her great Rival", Vice. The Hector claims that the calm and peace of mind (the pleasures of rest) which virtue is supposed to supply are more satisfactorily provided by the after-effects of wine and company (the pleasures of motion). Wine, he says, lulls cares and conscience, which he denounces as a chimera. He pragmatically scorns "the vain fantastick fear/Of punishments, we know not when, nor where". His view of conscience as a weapon used by politicians to support weak laws, and by the clergy to abuse the unthinking rabble, seems to have given Richard Ames the idea of introducing Conscience, an allegorical figure,* into his hudibrastic poem The Rake (1695). Oldham's Hector, less sensitive than Ames's rake, denounces conscience as a "Scarecrow!" which the clergy erect to frighten people "from the forbidden fruit of Vice,/Their own beloved Paradise". The remainder of the stanza castigates the hypocrisy of these "vile Canters", with their "holy Cheats", (p. 87), in the manner of the conclusion of Rochester's Satyr against Mankind.

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*Cf. Oldham's presentation of Virtue as a semi-allegorical character in the Counterpart to the Satyr against Vertue.

In its later stages the poem turns from ridicule of various virtuous figures to a more "positive" advocacy of Vice. Certain historical exempla are singled out for praise: Caesar; Jove (for his rape); Solomon; Nero; and, to remind the reader that it is a satire, that more immediately obvious villain Guy Fawkes, whose effigy was still burnt every year with considerable feeling. Fawkes is represented as the greatest of them all. The Hector asks what he must do to be as illustrious as these, and prays that they may inspire him to perform "Somewhat compleatly wicked, some vast Gyant crime". (p. 92) He professes himself a devotee of the Devil, and, in a parody of ecstatic religious experience, he feels "the pow'rful Charms,/And a new heat of sin my spirit warms". To the orthodox, he explains, sin is "a mere Privative of Good,/The Frailty and Defect of Flesh and Blood". His own attitude involves conscious dedication to sin, which allows Oldham some incidental satire on the Royal Society:

> In Us 'tis a Perfection, who profess
> A studied, and elaborate Wickedness.
> We are the great Royal Society of Vice,
> Whose Talents are to make Discoveries,
> And advance Sin like other Arts and Sciences. (p. 93)

It is this calculating cultivation of sin which distinguishes these rakehells from religious libertines such as the Ranters. The Hector's claim to regard the advancement of sin as a fitting aim and a worthy cause for which to perform empirical experiments is a pose rather than a belief. The extremity of his anticlericalism and desire to shock, which were sincerely motivated in the case of the Ranters, gives him and his fellow rakes away.

The exaggeration continues when the Hector disparages Adam's "sneaking" sin, which was unworthy of the parent of our sin, and our race, who, by his guilt, "our Nature doubly did debase". In particular, it was unworthy of the father of great Cain, "The noble Cain, whose bold, and gallant Act/Proclaim'd him of more high Extract". If only the Fates had put him in Cain's place, says the Hector, he would have done "A Deed, which should decry/The Stoicks dull Equality". (p. 94) He would have committed a sin in which the Devil himself would have had no share. He would indeed have outdone the Devil in wickedness. Having reached the ultimate point of hyperbole for this particular chain of argument, the poem ends. This was not the last time Oldham found a use for Cain. He appears again (in lines very reminiscent of those on Hobbes in J. Lessee's "Answer" to Rochester's Satyr), in the fragment A Vision (1678):

> Next Hell's first Hero, Cain, with hands embrued
> In early murder, stains of Brother's blood: ...[26]

It is perhaps also worth noting that Cain, like Sardanapalus, was resurrected as the "Byronic hero", and that Byron's career had many elements in common with Rochester's. The Regency period might be seen as affording libertinism a last fling before a century of romanticism.

The Apology ... by Way of Epilogue is, almost inevitably, anti-climactic. There is something self-congratulatory, almost priggish, in the way Oldham, after justifying his method, goes on to

draw a distinction between his own purpose and that of the indiscriminate:

> Our Poet has a diff'rent Taste of Wit,
> Nor will to common Vogue himself submit.
> Let some admire the Fops whose Talents lie
> In venting dull insipid Blasphemy:
> He swears he cannot with those Terms dispense,
> Nor will be Damn'd for the reputeof Sense. (p. 95)

These lines are reminiscent of his allusion to the Wits in the early Ode to Morwent.* This impression is strengthened when he goes on to draw the distinction between true wit exercised in a patriotic, lawful cause, and the anonymous libels, lampoons and bawdy rhymes:

> Such as our Nobles write --------
> Whose nauseous Poetry can reach no higher
> Than what the Codpiece, or its God inspire.
> So lewd, they spend at Quill; you'd justly think
> They wrote with something nastier than Ink. (p. 96)

Although the purpose of these lines is supposed to be to show how wit has been cheapened by confusion with ribaldry in the hands of inferior practitioners, Oldham comes near to committing the very offence he is condemning here - and this is before he had met "our Nobles". He expresses determination that, should he ever again find himself "to the base Itch of Verse inclin'd":

> He never means to make his End Delight:
> Should he do so, he must despair Success:
> For he's not now debauch'd enough to please,
> And must be damn'd for Want of Wickedness. (pp. 96-7)

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*See p.264 above.

Accordingly, he will use his wit to defend virtue and attack vice, by means of "noble Satire". The Apology marks a step in the direction of Oldham's achievement of greater control, since abandoning the pindarics of the Satyr against Vertue.

A more impressive assertion of Oldham's dedication to satire is to be found in the Satire upon a Printer:

> But I, whom Spleen, and manly Rage inspire,
> Brook no Affront, at each Offence take Fire:
> Born to chastise the Vices of the Age,
> Which Pulpits dare not, nor the very Stage:
> Sworn to lash Knaves of all Degrees, and spare
> None of the Kind, however Great they are;
> Satire's my only Province, and Delight,
> For whose dear sake alone I've wow'd to write: ... (p. 249)

In such a lofty cause as this, he feels he has the justification to "seek Occasions, court Abuse,/To shew my Parts, and signalise my Muse". It is precisely because his purpose is more elevated than the writers of "damn'd Placket-Rhimes,/Such as our Nobles write" (p. 96) that he will not allow the printer to escape. Revenge is inevitable, since the printer has "touch'd my tender'st Part of Honour, Wit", "by Printing a Piece of his [presumbably the Satyr against Vertue], grossly mangled and faulty". (p. 248)

The personal animus which informs sections of the Satire upon a Printer finds more sustained expression in Oldham's Satire upon a Woman. Bonamy Dobrée found it so offensive that he omitted this poem from his reprint of Bell's bowdlerised 1854 and 1874 editions of Oldham's poetry on the grounds that it was not a satire at all, but a curse - and a "matchlessly loathsome" one at that.[27] This

is precisely what it is, for it belongs to that species of poems which, Puttenham tells us, "were called Dirae, such as Virgill made aginst Battarus and Ouide against Ibis":

> And this was done by a maner of imprecation, or as we call it by cursing and banning of the parties, and wishing all euill to alight vpon them, and though it neuer the sooner happened, yet was it great easment to the boiling stomacke.[28]

A previous example of the genre in English is Donne's The Curse, and its line "May he be scorn'd by one, whom all else scorne"[29] is echoed by Oldham's "She doom'd to Love of one, whom all else hate". (I, p. 20) That contemporaries recognised the classical origins of the type, and Oldham's affinity with them, is shown by an allusion in Samuel Wesley's Maggots. (1685):

> Worse than these Last, if any Curses more
> & Ovid e're knew, or fiercer Oldham's store.

The desire for "great easment to the boiling stomacke" may go some way towards explaining the so-called misogyny of some of Rochester's poems or Dorset's satires on the King's mistresses.

Puttenham's statement could at least partially justify the extreme lampooning curse uttered in Upon the Author of a Play call'd Sodom. However, the tone of schoolboy-like glee in these lines, where one disgusting image is exceeded by the next, does not suggest catharsis as a motive. They are best seen as an exaggeration of the mode, a parody of the dirae, wherein Oldham displays his powers of obscene invention, for the private amusement of the Wits. The poem is no argument against Rochester's authorship of Sodom, since, even if he were shown the lines in question,

he could be expected to take their "ingenuity" in good part. In any case Oldham's ambivalent attitude to Rochester, the Wits and obscenity makes it unwise to rely on his lines as in any way indicative of the authorship of this work.

Satire as direct as this is open to misinterpretation, as we have already seen was the case with the much more restrained Satyr against Vertue. There is always the risk that the disgust engendered in the reader will be directed against the satirist instead of the intended victim. A good deal of the Satires upon the Jesuits is liable to offend a modern reader, who may find it difficult or distasteful to re-live the hysterical religious intolerance which surrounded the "Horrid Plot". The Satires mark Oldham's introduction of a more measured obscenity into satire on state affairs, a natural extension of his expressions of dedication to satire as the scourge of vice. In the Prologue he says he is impatient with the hordes of "scribbling fool[s]", who rail "with license" at this time of national emergency, when "pointed satire and the sharps of wit/... are th' only weapons fit" to censure the Jesuits.[30] However, the dark and gloomy intensity of the Satires is more akin to the rant of heroic drama than to political satire as practised by Dryden and Pope.

The Satires were planned as heroic satires, and Oldham's models included, besides Juvenal for the total concept, Jonson's Catiline his Conspiracy for Satire II, and George Buchanan's Franciscanus et Fratres for Satire III. The latter work, a

Reformation satire to which Oldham's roughness is analogous, and to which he acknowledges his indebtedness in the "Advertisement" to the Satires (p. 18), belongs to a tradition whose treatment of the two great themes of Woman* and Religion has its source in Le Roman de la Rose, and which is expressed paradoxically but sincerely in Donne's Holy Sonnets XIV and XVIII.[31] Harold Brooks has also shown Oldham's debt to two contemporary heroic poems, Cowley's Davideis, and Paradise Lost. On the latter's influence he says:

> The published Satyrs owe Milton little or nothing in detail: but the abandoned draft of The Vision proves that Oldham's mind when he began them was saturated with Paradise Lost; and W.J. Courthope is therefore almost certainly right in deriving from Milton's Satan "the indomitable energy ... fixed resolution in the pursuit of evil" and "relentless hatred of good" [A History of English Poetry, III 501] with which Oldham endowed his Jesuits.[32]

The ranting style of the Satires is impressive in its force, but it allows little of the variation of tone, and almost none of the subtlety and lightness of touch which Dryden and Pope would bring to political satire. However, their place in the history of heroic satire is secure, since they supplied Dryden with the impetus to effect this refinement.

From the point of view of libertine ideas, the most fruitful is Satire III, subtitled Loyola's Will. In it Loyola advises his followers to be Epicures:

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*Oldham's equivalent on the subject of Woman, A Satire upon a Woman, in the tradition of the popular satirical ballad, and Juvenal's Sixth Satire, inspired a large number of imitations later in the century, for example by Gould and Ames, and for that matter Pope's refinement of the mode, Epistle II. To a Lady. Butler's Satyr upon Marriage is a more general satire on this theme.

Live you in luxury and pamper'd ease,
As if whole Nature were your cateress.
Soft be your beds ...
. . . . . .
With dainties load your board, whose ev'ry dish
May tempt cloy'd gluttons, ...
... Let richest wines
With mirth your heads inflame, with lust your veins,
Such as the friends of dying popes would give
For cordials to prolong their gasping life. (ll. 261-72)

Inevitably, he gives detailed instructions on how to seduce maids during Confession (for example, by showing them "Aretine/Instead o' th' rosary" (ll. 423-4), a subject Loyola, "the old lecher", expatiates on from wide experience, and with "sweet remembrance of past pleasure fill'd". (l. 438)

L.I. Bredvold has cogently demonstrated how Dryden showed that the Jesuits' political theory was at one with that of the Whigs and Dissenters.[33] Dryden makes this comparison unequivocally in the Epistle to the Whigs prefixed to The Medal (1682) and in the postscript to his translation of Maimbourg's History of the League, besides giving a practical illustration of it in several of his poems. Bredvold has shown how Dryden attacks both sets of extremists in Absalom and Achitophel, Religio Laici and The Hind and the Panther for the same reason, that they each denied the sacredness of secular authority, which Dryden, as a loyal Tory, upheld. It is for similar reasons that the Jesuits are not the only religious group to feel the sting of Oldham's satire. One of the items which Wood objected to was the Character of a Certain Ugly Old P[arson], written early in 1677, and generally believed to be based on Oldham's own father, a nonconformist minister. The Character

provides further evidence of Oldham's use of the disgusting image from classical models. The basic idea underlying it, that physical deformity denotes evil, encourages him to make his dissenter as exaggeratedly old and repulsively deformed as possible. In this respect he follows the description of Thersites in the second book of the Iliad (and hence Shakespeare's Thersites in Troilus and Cressida), as well as many less illustrious contemporary "Characters".[34] In its sustained exaggeration this prose Character rivals those of Butler. Like Butler, Oldham gives his subject many of the attributes popularly associated with the enthusiastic sects. This passage, for example, compares the dissenter with Muggleton in the pillory, and argues that sexual and religious excesses are indistinguishable in their effects:

> You'd take him by his Looks and Posture for Muggleton doing Penance, and paulted with rotten Eggs. Had his Hearers the Trick of Writing Short-Hand, I should fancy him an Offender upon a Scaffold, and them Penning his Confession. Not a fluxt Debauchee in a Sweating-Tub makes worse Faces. He makes Doctrine as Folks do their Water in the Stone or Strangury. Balaam's Ass was a better Divine, and had a better Delivery. (II, pp. 332-3)

The prose of this looks forward to Defoe and to Swift, but there are numerous instances of similar techniques being used in verse, for instance Robert Gould's satire on the Quakers, Mother Clark's Ghost.*

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* The Quakers were often the butts of Royalists. For a good example of this see News from Colchester Or, a Proper new Ballad of certain passages betwixt a Quaker and a Colt, at Horsly near Colchester in Essex To the Tune of, Tom of Bedlam, by Sir John Denham. Known in some versions as A Relation of a Quaker that to the Shame of his Profession Attempted to Bugger a Mare ... it stresses that the Quakers' licentiousness and Adamite behaviour are the result of antinomian teachings attributed to the Jesuits. The version printed in The Common Muse, ed. Pinto and Rodway (1957), is entitled The Four-Legg'd Elder, or A Horrible Relation of a Dog and an Elder's Maid, by Sir John Birkenhead, a rather more subtle attempt to discredit the Presbyterians by a similar technique. Other examples in the same volume include Off a Puritane, The Quaker's Song, and The Penurious Quaker, or, The High Priz'd Harlot.

Dating from about the same time as the Character is A Dithyrambick, which Oldham's notebook tells us was "Suppos'd to be Spoken by Rochester at ye Guinny Club".[35] The "Drunkard" who speaks it has some similarities with the Hector who declaims the Satyr against Vertue. Both are railers (or ranters), but whereas the Hector at least practises variety in his vices, however unlikely some of them may be, the Drunkard's rant becomes boring sooner, and well before the seventh long stanza, he has borne out James Thorpe's stricture that: "For insipid reading, drinking songs can challenge almost any other form of writing".[36] Both characters are somewhat ridiculous figures. The Hector is left constantly trying to top his last mock-heroic exaggeration with further hyperbole, but the Drunkard is more of a buffoon. Supposed to be "in a Masque", he falls down at the end in a drunken stupor.

The poem appears to have been suggested by Cowley's note in his Praise of Pindar that Dithyrambic: "was a bold free enthusiastical kind of Poetry, as of men inspired by Bacchus, that is Half-Drunk, from whence came the Greek Proverb, ... You are as mad as a Dithyrambique Poet".[37] Cowley goes on to discuss a Horace Ode, which is "something like this kind (but I believe with less Liberty)", where the speaker "is presently half-mad, and promises I know not what, ... and then he ends like a man ranting in his drink, that falls suddenly asleep". The ironic opening lines of Oldham's poem are imitated from those of Cowley's Wisdom, which read:

> 'Tis mighty Wise that you would now be thought
> With your grave Rules from musty Morals brought ...[38]

Oldham changes the generalised libertine rejection of "dull rules" into a triplet where the Drunkard attacks Puritan casuistry:

> Yes, you are mighty wise, I warrant, mighty wise !
> With all your godly Tricks, and Artifice,
> Who think to chouse Me of my dear and pleasant Vice. (p. 183)

There may be some justification for the Drunkard's views on Puritan hypocrisy, but his reliability is soon eroded by the extravagance of the enthusiasm with which he posits his own "religion". In this way, Oldham attacks both extremes, but libertinism is the primary target.

The Drunkard's renunciation of the "holy Sham", who is apparently trying to curb his drinking, is equivalent to the Hector's more generalised rejection of the "virtuous Fools" with their restricting "dull Morality and Rules". Defiantly he urges him to "cant and whine" at some novice in sin, who has not yet discovered the divinity of wine and drunkenness. The position of both the Puritan and the Drunkard in the poem is extreme, the former only by implication, but the latter on his own admission:

> It is resolv'd, I will drink on, and Die,
> I'll not one Minute lose, not I,
> To hear your troublesome Divinity. (p. 184)

His description of the effects of wine parodies the workings of the "inner light" in enthusiastic nonconformists, rather like Butler's Character of "A Sot", who:

> governs all his Actions by the Drink within him, as a Quaker does by the Light within him; has a different Humour for every Nick his Drink rises to, like the Degrees of the Weatherglass, and proceeds from Ribaldry and Bawdry to Politics, Religion, and Quarreling, until it is at the Top, and then it is the Dog-Days with him; from whence he falls down again, until his Liquor is at the Bottom, and then he lyes quiet and is frozen up.[39]

Once again, over-indulgence in the creature is equated with licence in religion and politics, besides giving rise to behaviour of a more immediately threatening nature.

The Drunkard is himself more of a parody of the popular conception of an Epicurean (that is, an Epicure). He leaves toil and strife to "the vile Slaves of Bus'ness":

> Who want the Leisure, or the Wit, to live;
> While we Life's tedious Journey softer make,
> And reap those Joys which they lack Sense to take. (p. 184)

He thinks of himself as resembling the Epicurean deities:

> Thus live the Gods (if aught above our selves there be)
> They live so happy, unconcern'd, and free:
> Like us they sit, and, with a careless Brow,
> Laugh at the petty Jars of Human-Kind below:
> Like us they spend their Age in gentle Ease,
> Like us they drink; for what were all their Heav'n alas!
> If sober, and compell'd to want that Happiness. (pp. 184-5)

When sober, the Drunkard is painfully aware that time passed can never be retrieved, so he drinks to forget this tragic fact of life. The process is burlesqued in the fourth stanza, and forms the theme of the poem's conclusion:

> Drunk we'll march off and reel into the Tomb,
> Nature's convenient dark Retiring Room,*
> And there, from Noise remov'd, and all tumultuous Strife,
> Sleep out the dull Fatigue, and long Debauch of Life. (p. 189)
> Exit reeling.

In addition to its manuscript heading, the poem contains several internal hints that the Drunkard is intended to be Rochester. The most obvious parallel is in the Drunkard's attack on reason in the sixth stanza, and this is the most successful part of the poem:

> Adieu, poor tott'ring Reason ! tumble down !
> This Glass shall all thy proud, usurping Powers drown,
> And Wit, on thy cast Ruins, shall erect a Throne:
> Adieu, thou fond Disturber of our Life !
> That check'st our Joys, with all our Pleasures art at Strife:
> I've something brisker now to govern Me,
> A more exalted, noble Faculty,
> Above thy Logick, and vain-boasted Pedantry. (p. 188)

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* This line is imitated from Flatman, To the Memory of the Incomparable Orinda (1667).

His "noble Faculty" turns out to be the same as that which, according to the Drunkard, makes the Gods "without Deliberation wise". Some call this madness, but only those whom he disparagingly dismisses as "some dull Philosopher, some reas'ning Tool" - an echo of Rochester's satirist's scornful definition of man as "the reasoning engine". (Vieth, p. 95) The Drunkard prefers to compare this "madness" with manifestations of religious enthusiasm:

> ... the Rage young Prophets feel,
> When they with holy Frenzy reel:
> Drunk with the Spirits of infus'd Divinity,
> They rave, and stagger, and are mad, like me. (p. 189)

The last line is perhaps echoed in Pope's insect imagery, for example "They rave, recite, and madden round the land". (Epistle to Arbuthnot, l. 6)

Oldham's influence is readily appreciated if one sets beside A Dithyrambick the much more extensive treatment of the theme of madness, Jack Pavy, Alias, Jack Adams, by Robert Gould (who also wrote A Satyr upon Man). The harmless, mad Jack Pavy is spared the endless search after the true religion, represented for some by "the Private Spirit, which is Pride",[40] for others by atheism and other extremes. Being unconcerned with the world and its vices, Jack is able to experience the "true Content" defined in Epicurean terms as "perfect Innocence, and lasting Peace of Mind" (p. 267) which make this "natural Fool ... the happier Man". (p. 269) Gould's ironic comparison of Jack Pavy to the Epicurean deities resembles Oldham's Drunkard's similar paradoxical encomium of them as malicious, lazy drunkards:

The Epicureans cou'd not feign their Gods
More blest than Thee; for in their bright abodes,
In full Fruition of themselves, they lay,
And made Eternity one sportive Day:
Careless of all our petty Jars on Earth,
Which they not minded, or but made their Mirth.
So thou, in thy exalted Station plac't,
Enjoy'st the present Minute e're it wast,
Thoughtless of all to come, forgetting all that's past.
(pp. 268-9)

That Gould was an admirer of Oldham is shown by the praise he bestows on him and on his "Satire! the best Reformer of the Times" in To the Memory of Mr John Oldham, published in Oldham's Remains (II, pp. 224-6).

Similarly Bacchanalian in theme, An Ode of Anacreon Paraphrased is, like Rochester's Upon His Drinking a Bowl, an indirect adaptation of Anacreon's Odes XVII and XVIII. What remain mere hints or plain statements in Rochester's version are more fully elaborated in Oldham's longer one, the general treatment of which is modelled on Cowley's Anacreontiques. As his equivalent to Rochester's demand for "two lovely boys", their limbs entwined "in amorous folds" (Vieth, p. 53), Oldham, paraphrasing the same original, insists on his "loving She" for company. Another departure from Rochester's version is his use of the "advice to a painter" mode (a device he employs elsewhere too*), which is sustained through most of the poem. This hackneyed convention has beneficial effects here: where Rochester asks Vulcan to "carve thereon a spreading vine", Oldham, having already used the painting metaphor twice earlier in his poem,

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*See for example Bodleian Ms. Rawlinson Poet. 123, p. 129.

is able to ask his "gentle Artist" with the minimum of incongruity to: "Draw me first a spreading Vine,/Make its Arms the Bowl entwine" (p. 104). The scenes of drinking and loving are more fully detailed than Rochester's. Although both poems pay homage to Cupid and Bacchus, Rochester's ends with a crude statement of his devotion to lust, whereas Oldham develops his theme of both Gods' drunkenness more wittily:

> And when their reeling Forms I view,
> I'll think them drunk, and be so too:
> The Gods shall my Examples be,
> The Gods, thus Drunk in Effigy. (p. 105)

Oldham's best effort on the subject of drinking is his song The Careless Good Fellow (1680). Its theme is the speaker's indifference to everything except his bottle. Its strength lies in its witty allusion to contemporary events, and it expresses well Oldham's disillusion with the violence of the Popish Terror, remarkable so early as March 1680. In total contrast to the passionate polemics of the Satires upon the Jesuits is the Good Fellow's casually facetious dismissal of Catholics as "Coxcombs", who would never have plotted: "Had they been but true Subjects to Drink, and their King". For his part, he asserts:

> A friend, and a Bottle is all my Design;
> He has no Room for Treason, that's Top-full of Wine. (p. 144)

He goes on to express his indifference to all affairs of state, and to swear that, come what may:

> I'll drink in Defiance of Gibbet, and Halter,
> This is the Profession that never will alter. (p. 146)

This profession of faith in the bottle is one of the cornerstones of the libertine's religion. Oldham's Good Fellow is genuinely

indifferent to politics, unlike Dorset, in My Opinion ("After thinking this fortnight of Whig and of Tory") (1681), which ends by damning the Whigs with faint praise: "The Fools might be Whigs, none but Knaves should be Toryes".[41] Such songs would often profess indifference, only to reveal a partisan view later. An example of this device being used particularly transparently is The Pot-Companions, or Drinking and Smoaking prefer'd before Caballing and Plotting, where loyal, beer-drinking Tory is contrasted with disaffected, coffee-drinking Whig.

The figure of the railer appears even in Oldham's love verses. The best example is A Rant to his Mistress, written on 15 May 1676,[42] which shows Oldham's affinities with the ranting lover of heroic drama. Donne's influence on this group of early poems is also very marked. They are interesting to us chiefly for the way they combine the naturalistic elements we have earlier noted in Donne with Restoration Epicureanism. The lover in Complaining of Absence curses those worldly affairs which have forced him to be parted from his mistress. Though the poem lacks the dramatic immediacy of Donne's The Sun Rising, its language is somewhat suggestive of Donne, though rather more so of Aphra Behn:

> Curse on that Man, who Bus'ness first design'd,
> And by't enthralled a free-born Lover's Mind!

This contrast between an ideal, paradisial situation and the painful reality is at times permeated by a sincere awareness of the disparity between them:

Lovers should be as unconfin'd as Air,
Free, as its wild inhabitants, from Care:
So free those happy Lovers are Above,
Exempt from all Concerns, but those of Love:
But I, poor Lover-Militant below,
The Cares, and Troubles of dull Life must know. (II, pp. 139-40)

The plea for freedom is familiar from Donne; but the image of the "Militant",[43] which had been used by Cowley and Butler, injects a note which was perhaps only possible after King Charles had been executed in the name of freedom. Oldham's poem is primarily about freedom and its opposite, slavery. Despite the need to "toil for That, which does on Others wait,/And undergo the Drudgery of Fate", the lover vows that he will no longer be "a Vassal" to Fate, but will serve his mistress instead of "that Jilt". As a Militant, he believes in free will (and constancy to his ideals) rather than determinism. He ends by proclaiming his freedom from "troublesome Fatigues", and "Bus'ness" (p. 140). Similar ideas are expressed in Promising a Visit, where the lover is again a slave to business, but promises to make up for his absence on his return. Here Epicurean elements are observable:

Thither, when Bus'ness gives me a Release,
To lose my Cares in soft, and gentle Ease,
I'll come, and all Arrears of Kindness pay,
And live o'er my whole Absence in one Day. (p. 142)

The most similar of these early poems to Donne, in imagery though not in overall quality, is The Parting, which is also indebted to Cowley.

In another of these early verses, Oldham agains adds more obviously contemporary influences to those of Donne and Cowley. The Dreanis an erotic poem, much more "Restoration" in tone. First of all the scene is envisioned:

> I saw, methought, a lonely Privacy,
> Remote, alike, from Man's, and Heaven's Eye,
> Girt with the Covert of a shady Grove,
> Dark, as my Thoughts, and secret as my Love: ... (p. 109)

The lover's "dark thoughts" indicate that he is not sufficiently liberated from feelings of guilt associated with sex, so that he has to find a place remote from God's eye, as well as men's. In other respects, the setting is that of the soft primitivist paradise, with the gently murmuring stream, green bank and spreading tree. It is essentially a retreat from the bustle of court or city, in the manner of Cowley, but with the addition of a mate:

> There I, and there my dear Cosmelia sate,
> Nor envy'd Monarchs in our safe Retreat. (p. 109)

The lovers are explicitly compared to Adam and Eve in Paradise:

> So, heretofore, were the first Lovers laid *
> On the same Turf, of which themselves were made.

The pair are very much the Restoration lovers in their amorous grove: the middle section of the poem is a lengthy seduction scene. But even here, Oldham's irony is apparent. The consummation is described in terms of religious experience, and dates from about the same time as the description of the Drunkard's ecstasy inspired by drink in A Dithyrambique+:

> Not dying Saints enjoy such Extasies,
> When they in Vision antedate their Bliss;
> Not Dreams of a young Prophet are so bless'd,
> When holy Trances first inspire his Breast,
> And the God enters there, to be a Guest. (pp. 111-2)

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*These lines echo Waller's The Fall, which has:

> Thus the first lovers on the clay,
> Of which they were composed, lay. (Works (1729), p. 118)

+See p. 279 above.

The figure of the prophet is probably derived from Dryden's Aureng-Zebe (1676):

> If love be vision, mine has all the fire
> Which, in first dreams, young prophets does inspire. (p. 12)

Indeed, the whole passage from Oldham's poem is mock-heroic, and it has its analogues in the opening lines of the fourth Canto of The Rape of the Lock.* Pope may well have been familiar with The Dream. It was certainly well known in the late seventeenth century. The rake in Ward's Three Nights Adventures quotes it+, and it inspired several imitations, including Gould's The Dream, and another poem of the same title which was attributed to Rochester.[44]

The pleasure celebrated in Oldham's The Dream, though it exists only in the imagination, is said to be more real than that which "duller Mortals" value. Exactly the opposite view of "enjoyment" is conveyed in A Fragment of Petronius Paraphrased. This is the same fragment ("Foeda est in coitu et brevis voluptas") which Rochester adapted under the ironic title of The Platonic Lady, whose speaker is a lady who is far from "Platonic". Oldham's poem is a much closer paraphrase of the original, though its opening lines echo Suckling's Against Fruition:

> Fruition adds no new wealth, but destroyes,
> And while it pleaseth much, the palate cloyes,
> ... this once past
> What relishes ? ...
> Urge not 'tis necessary; alas! we know
> The homeliest thing which mankind does is so.[45]

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*Cf. also "Or bright as Visions of expiring Maids". (IV, 42)

+See p.314 below.

Characteristically, however, Oldham's speaker voices much stronger feelings of revulsion in his post-coital depression, as a result of which he urges control of the passions:

> Then let us not too eager run,
> By Passion, blindly, hurried on,
> Like Beasts, who nothing better know,
> Than what meer Lust incites them to: *
> For when in Floods of Love we're drench'd,
> The Flames are by Enjoyment quench'd. (p. 101)

There is something essentially unrealistic in his prescription to "Kiss out long Eternity" as an everlasting prelude to everlasting happiness:

> Here no Faintness dulls Desires,
> And Pleasure never flags, nor tires. (p. 101)

This resembles the "pornotopia" of Victorian pornography, a state characterised by conventions such as the permanent erection and the ever-submissive woman.[46] It really stems from Oldham's guilt, which, as the son of a nonconformist Minister, he was never able to shake off, and which found release in the Juvenalian lash and, like Abiezer Coppe's, in the awesome curse, as well as the obscenity. Oldham, in fact, is not really liberated at all.

Oldham's use of the erotic and the obscene displays a wide range. At one end of the scale is the melting allurement of the unfulfilled passion of Byblis for her brother, from Ovid's Metamorphoses Book IX. At the other extreme is On the Author of a Play call'd Sodom, and the almost equally anti-erotic curse sustained throughout virtually the whole of the Satire upon a Woman. Somewhere in between comes the witty use of low words in Upon a Lady, Who, by overturning of a Coach, had her Coats behind flung up, and what was under, shown to the View of the Company. This imitation of

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* This elaboration of the Latin is extended even further in Rochester's Dialogue Between Strephon and Daphne, where it becomes the poem's central metaphor. (see above, Chapter IV, p. 196.)

Voiture, the only bawdy poem which Oldham published, is quite a competent burlesque of the "praise of Phyllis" genre, of which Dorset himself need not have been ashamed.

The first phase of Oldham's poetic development, to which most of his erotic and obscene writings belong, ended in the summer of 1677, when he underwent a spiritual crisis. Though sincere in his inclinations to virtue, Oldham nevertheless feared ridicule from the Wits. This can be seen in a letter of his to an old college friend, written in a mood of penitence, and dated "day after Midsummer 77".[47] It was probably at this time also that he wrote A Sunday-Thought in Sickness, an even more unequivocal expression of his remorse. Its form is influenced by Cowley's Discourses, written mainly in prose and always ending with an ode. Oldham's verse conclusion is particularly indebted to that of Cowley's Discourse ... on ... Cromwell.

In A Sunday-Thought Oldham confesses his fear of death, contrasting it with his former belief that he "could have been merry in the Sight of [my] Coffin, and drink a Health with the Sexton in [my] own Grave". (II, p. 335) Now, however, "All the Jollity of [my] Humour and Conversation is turn'd on a sudden into Chagrin and Melancholy black as Despair, and dark as the Grave". (p. 335) He renounces empty pleasures and the Hobbist philosophy (p. 336), as well as scepticism and atheism (p. 337), and he recognises that the Epicureanism he used to boast of was merely an "unhappy suspected Calm" before the storm which now ravages him (p. 337). He admits that he has abused talents which should have served God and mankind,

by making them "the Patrons of Debauchery, and Pimps and Panders to Vice" (p. 339), which perhaps refers to his obscene verses. He also confesses that his religion has been no more than:

> empty Parade and Shew: Either an useful Hypocrisy taken up for Interest, or a gay specious Formality worn in Complaisance to Custom, and the Mode, and as changeable as my Cloaths and their Fashion. How oft have I gone to Church (the Place where we are to pay him Homage and Duty) as to an Assignation or Play, only for Diversion. (pp. 339-40)

The device of libertine as hypocrite, using the guise of religion to further his own selfish ends, had been fully exploited by Molière in Dom Juan,* and it was to be followed by Ward and Mandeville. Unlike any of these, Oldham is sincerely penitent, and his prayer is rewarded by the faith expressed in the poem which concludes the piece. Published as the last item in Oldham's Remains (1684), A Sunday-Thought could have served as a model for subsequent accounts of libertine conversions, such as Richard Ames's The Rake: or, The Libertine's Religion (1693), Richard Burridge's execrable Religio Libertini (1711), or its equally dreary verse equivalent, The Rake Reform'd (1718). Oldham's sincerity, reminiscent of Rochester's more famous conversion and resultant peace, is much more acceptable than any of its inferior imitations.

That Oldham saw himself as Rochester's heir is shown by his elegy on him. Although Bion, in marked contrast to Oldham's usual style, strikes a sincere elegiac note, this is too often spoilt by conventional pastoral trilling. The lines recording the reaction of contemporary poets to Rochester's death, and his own indebtedness to him, are the most interesting part of the poem:

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*See above, Chapter II, p. 87.

Waller, sweetest of living Bards, prepares,
For Thee, his tender'st, and his mournfull'st Airs,
And I, the meanest of the British Swains,
Amongst the rest, offer these humble Strains:
If I am reckon'd not unblest in Song,
'Tis what I owe, to thy all-teaching Tongue:
Some of thy Art, some of thy tuneful Breath
Thou didst, by Will, to worthless Me, bequeath,
Others, thy Flocks, thy Lands, thy Riches have,
To Me, Thou didst thy Pipe, and Skill vouchsafe. (p. 206)

Oldham has a very good claim to his title of the English Juvenal: his dedication to satire was characteristically expressed in Juvenalian imitations, and his famous lines on London in the manner of Juvenal's Third Satire influenced Gay and Johnson. Yet he soon became aware of the narrow range which Juvenalian imitation imposed. Probably the credit should go to Rochester and the Wits, themselves strongly influenced by Boileau, for opening Oldham's eyes to the wider possibilities of the Horatian mode, though the impetus to try it himself came from reading Dryden's Preface to Ovid's Epistles (1680). Dryden's discussion of the principles of translation had a marked effect on the way in which Oldham rendered Boileau's Eighth Satire, his equivalent of Rochester's Satyr against Mankind.

The first indication that Oldham's poem follows Boileau more closely than Rochester's had is its title, The Eighth Satire of Monsieur Boileau Imitated. Oldham's adversarius is introduced even before the poem begins: a headnote explains that "The Poet brings himself in, as discoursing with a Doctor of the University upon the Subject ensuing". The first speaker, then, is explicitly identified with "the Poet", whereas Rochester's satirist does not necessarily always voice Rochester's own views. The speech of Oldham's

adversarius is distinguished throughout by italics, and his poem is a more thorough dialogue, especially in its early stages. The "Doctor" interjects after only four lines, but Rochester's "formal band and beard" does not appear until line forty-six, and even then he only has one speech.

Rochester's design is fairly circumscribed. As its title in some versions, A Satyr against Reason and Mankind, would imply, the poem's primary targets are speculative reason, and man's pride in it. This is made explicit in the opening verse paragraph, when the speaker says he would rather be "anything but that vain animal/Who is so proud of being rational". (my emphasis). Oldham encompasses this too, and most of the verbal echoes of Rochester's Satyr concern speculative reason. But he has a wider purpose in addition. The middle section of his poem embraces a denunciation of the Cowleyan vices of avarice and ambition. He then dismisses the passions as a fit topic "For More and Cudworth to enlarge about" (II, p. 12), in order to take "a View of Man, in his best Light,/Wherein he seems to most Advantage set". What follows is an embryonic though more bitter Essay on Man, an examination of man in society, which neatly returns to the poem's point of departure, an adverse comparison of man to the beasts. Pope's debt to Oldham, both here and elsewhere, has not been fully appreciated.[48]

After the initial Rochesterian interchange about reason, the Doctor, defender of reason's God-like quality, replies to Oldham's attack on it thus:

> This idle Talk ... and rambling Stuff
> May pass in Satire, and take well enough
> With sceptick Fools, who are dispos'd to jeer
> At serious things: ... (p. 6)

But this description would better fit the sceptical freethinker of Rochester's Satyr. Oldham's satirist is more the refined Epicurean, agreeing with the Doctor's characterisation of wisdom as a state of Epicurean calm:

> 'Tis an Evenness of Soul,
> A steddy Temper, which no Cares controul,
> No Passions ruffle, nor Desires inflame,
> Still constant to it self, and still the same, ... (pp. 6-7)

He is sceptical only to the extent of asserting that wisdom thus defined is "Less us'd by any, than the Fool, call'd Man". He goes on to argue that man is indeed inconstant and changeable. He admires the ant's foresight and industry, in contrast to "silier Man", who is led astray "By Reason, his false Guide", and "Tost by a thousand Gusts of wav'ring Doubt" (p. 7). As an example of man's fickle nature the satirist chooses an "unthinking sot", who, having spent a large part of his life declaiming against matrimony, soon finds himself married, and "quoted for an Instance by the rest". He is not pure fool, like Rochester's similar exemplum in Artemisia to Chloe; for his arrogant assumption "that Heav'n from some mirac'lous side,/For him, alone, had drawn a faithful Bride" shows he has only himself to blame, and it is the satirist's cue for a denunciation of human pride. (pp. 7-8)

The next section of the poem presents semi-allegorical figures of Avarice and Ambition. At the same time Oldham makes exemplary use of contemporary individuals for incidental satire, in the manner which Pope was to perfect. Avarice, for example, urges:

> And tho' you've more than Buckingham has spent
> Or Cuddon got, like stingy Bethel save. (p. 10)

The saving and sparing are completely pointless, since as soon as the miser dies his "Spendthrift Heir" will spend the fortune on his coach and six, "Brace of Punks", and the pleasures of "the Town". In the same way that Avarice is represented as rousing the victim immediately "soft Sleep" has closed his eyes, Ambition is seen to "drag him forth from soft Repose, and Ease" (p. 11), clearly indicating that the Epicurean state of ease is to be preferred.

In answer to the Doctor's idealised picture of man in civilised society, "secur'd by Government, and Laws", Oldham's spokesman again uses the beasts as his standard of comparison, saying that they live in harmony with each other, without the law and its corruptions. Here again, he satirises contemporary abuses:

> They fear no dreadful Quo Warranto Writ,
> To shake their ancient Privilege, and Right:
> No Courts of Sessions, or Assize, are there,
> No Common-Pleas, King's-Bench, or Chanc'ry-Bar:
> But happier they, by Nature's Charter free,
> Secure, and safe, in mutual Peace agree,
> And know no other Law, but Equity. (p. 14)

It was "Man alone, that worst of Brutes", he continues, who first committed murder, and who "Did Honour first, that barbarous Term devise,/Unknown to all the gentler Savages". These libertine arguments are not so easy to counter as the exaggerated ones of the Hector in the Satyr against Vertue, for whom apparently even murder was a worthy cause. The Doctor's inadequate reply is an extravagant paean on man's reason, in the manner of Rochester's "band and beard". He calls it "this fair Pilot given to steer,/His tott'ring Bark thro' Life's rough Ocean here". (p. 19) His exaggerated claims are easily disposed of by Oldham's satirist. First he portrays

a miser advising his son to reject learning in favour of more practical means of self-advancement. There then follows a bitter address to the Doctor on the uselessness of speculative controversy (including some heartfelt lines on the ingratitude of patrons), which ends by advising him to "Go, practice with some Banker how to cheat" (p. 19). Oldham's point, like Rochester's, is that this false reason only misleads, and that beasts are happier because they are guided by instinct, which remains constant. After adducing several instances of human folly of which animals are innocent, he introduces an ass. Having observed a number of contemporary abuses, the animal concludes that "Man is a beast, as much as we". (p. 23). This is also the conclusion of the poem.

The Eighth Satire of Monsieur Boileau Imitated represents a considerable maturing of Oldham's talent compared with his earlier railing, and the use of the dialogue in particular is a significant addition to his repertoire, pointing the direction in which he would probably have developed. Some aspects of this process are prefigured in the Counterpart to the Satyr against Vertue, which also advocates a refined Epicureanism (II, p. 233). It contains a striking verbal parallel too. When the Doctor speaks of reason as a "fair Pilot" to steer man's "tott'ring Bark thro' Life's rough Ocean here" he is echoing the Counterpart's description of Virtue as that "sure card, whereby this frail and tott'ring Bark we steer/Thro' Life's tempestuous Ocean here"[49] (p. 229). In obvious contrast to the Hector's dedication to Vice in the Satyr, in the Counterpart Virtue is the only cause for which the poet would sacrifice his freedom:

Easy are all the Bonds that are impos'd by Thee;
Easy as those of Lovers are,
(If I with aught less pure may Thee compare)
Nor do they force, but only guide, our Liberty. (II, p. 228)

This indicates how completely the poet has renounced the libertine sentiments of his early poems in favour of refined Epicurean calm. Later in the Counterpart he specifically rejects slavery to the vices, including lust, and denounces Epicures (II, pp. 230-7).

Like Dryden, Oldham frequently expresses the highest admiration for "beloved Cowley",* whose influence on him is just as strong as Juvenal's. It is most noticeable in A Satire Addressed to a Friend, that is about to leave the University, and come abroad in the World, where Oldham voices a longing for retreat very similar to Cowley's desire to "be master at last of a small house and large garden":[50]

'Thas ever been the Top of my Desires,
The utmost Height to which my Wish aspires,
That Heav'n would bless me with a small Estate,
Where I might find a close, obscure Retreat;
There, free from Noise, and all ambitious Ends,
Enjoy a few choice Books, and fewer Friends,
Lord of my self, accountable to none,
But to my Conscience, and my God alone;
There live unthought of, and unheard of die,
And grudge Mankind my very Memory. (II, pp. 127-8)

Oldham's wish for the gentlemanly independence which a private income would bring should be seen in the light of his contempt for professional writers. In A Satire, Spencer's Ghost he asks:

... what can we expect that's brave and great
From a poor needy Wretch, that writes to eat ? (II, p. 156)

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*As he calls him in A Letter from the Country. Cf. "sacred Cowley" (II, p. 151).

Although he expresses the same yearning for a modest, Epicurean retirement in A Satire, in Imitation of the Third of Juvenal (p. 177), he realises that it is beyond his means, but at the same time, with characteristic independence, he refuses to demean himself by service. He illustrates the dangers of servility by the fable of the wolf and the dog. The latter enjoys a life "Pamper'd with Luxury, and holy Ease" (p. 128). However, when he hears that the dog's "Complaisance" has been attained by whipping his "Roughness" out of him, the wolf decides to retain his freedom. To this extent therefore Nahum Tate is right to stress, in one of the elegies prefixed to Oldham's Remains, that his "Predecessors" are Cowley and Butler (II, p. 200).

His successors may be said to be Dryden, Pope and Johnson, all of whom surpassed him in their different ways. Dryden paid glowing tribute to his affinity in To the Memory of Mr. Oldham:

> Farewell too little and too lately known,
> Whom I began to think and call my own;
> For sure our Souls were near ally'd; and thine
> Cast in the same Poetick mould with mine.
> One common Note on either Lyre did strike,
> And Knaves and Fools we both abhorr'd alike:
> To the same Goal did both our Studies drive,
> The last set out the soonest did arrive.[51]

Tactfully, he goes on to suggest that age might have improved the roughness of Oldham's verse:

> It might (what Nature never gives the young)
> Have taught the numbers of thy native Tongue.
> But Satyr needs not those, and Wit will shine
> Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line.
> A noble Error, and but seldom made,
> When Poets are by too much force betray'd.

Dryden had undoubtedly learned from Oldham. The Satires upon the Jesuits may well have made possible the progression from MacFlecknoe to Absalom and Achitophel. Certainly his mastery of Horatian raillery rather than Juvenalian railing, not to mention his superior ear, ensured that he was not "by too much force betray'd". But it was a two-way influence: Oldham derived much of the force of his Satires from the rant of the heroic dramas of Dryden and others; it was then open to Dryden to transmute that force from the bludgeon of lampoon into the rapier of true wit in his own mature poetry.

Pope's list of "The most Remarkable Works in this Author" on the fly-leaf of his copy of Oldham's poems[52] includes, surprisingly, the Satyr against Vertue. Much less surprising is his selection of some of the translations of Horace. Pope read Oldham with critical attention, and it has been argued that Oldham owes his place in literary history to his contribution to the development of English imitations of classical verse satire.[53] As a formal verse satirist he has a secure place between Marvell and Dryden. Despite the narrowness of its range, his work was ambitious in its intentions: none of the Court Wits produced a body of work to rival its scope. As a libertine writer, rather than an exponent of libertine behaviour, he is as important as Rochester, possibly more important, since he more clearly exemplifies libertine ideas. This is because his use of libertinism for satirical ends often entails gross exaggeration of the libertine position, a technique which he had learnt from Rochester, and which spawned numerous other imitations from a host of lesser writers in the closing years of the century. Yet behind his exposure of doctrinal and behavioural licentiousness lies a firm belief in responsible liberty, as opposed to sexual and religious licence, which Milton had stood for, and which

was to form an important theme in the work of such very different eighteenth century figures as Pope, Thomson, Wilkes, Burns and Blake.

2 "Characters" and Hudibrastics

With the notable exception of Robert Gould's, most satires on libertinism (and for that matter celebrations of it) after Oldham take the form of either prose "Characters" or hudibrastic verses. The popularity of both genres owes almost everything to Butler, who invented one of them and was the most prolific exponent of the other. His Characters were mostly written in the late 1660's, and although they were not published until 1759, it is reasonable to surmise that their circulation in manuscript, coinciding with the height of public interest in libertinism about 1675, does much to explain the popularity of this genre with so many satirists of the period. In the case of Ned Ward undeubtedly, and probably for several of the other practitioners of both these genres, personal admiration for Butler was an added factor. The man's impecunious last years were already legendary, and might be expected to exact sympathy from poverty-stricken professional poets; whereas Augustan concepts of decorum were not yet sufficiently established to preclude such "low" forms altogether.

The "Character" had typically worked by creating a stereotype, a distillation of the subject's essential features expressed in a witty, epigrammatic manner. The Restoration rake was soon added to the character-writer's repertoire, though some of his distinctive features are derived from hints in earlier "Characters", including Joseph Hall's Characters of Virtues and Vices (1608) and John Earle's

Microcosmography (1628). Richard Flecknoe's Characters, first published in 1658 and reprinted several times, with additions, from 1660 to 1673, are part of this tradition. That entitled "Of an extream Vitious Person" provided suggestions for many successors during the Restoration period:

> His mind is a Room all hung with Aretines Postures, and he is so full of the Species, as he is incapable to imagine how any man can be honest, or woman chaste. He is so bravely vicious, as he would give any one a good reward to find him out a sin he knew not, and he would be ashamed not to commit it, when he knew it once. He is so immersed in the flesh, as all spirit is suffocated in him, and he lives not but possest by some wicked spirit, that incites him to all wickedness. To say nothing of his deboichery or peccadillios, and sins of lesser note; he out-goes an Atheist in unbelief; for profaneness has no parallel, and I should offend all pious ears to mention his impiety. I will say no more then, not to be thought falsly to tax the age, with producing Monsters of Men, whose Vices no Water can purge, no Fire expiate; and whose wickedness were able to call down destruction on a Nation, if it were not averted by some pious in it yet; whose vertues, though they equal not the others vices, yet with the allowance of humane frailty, help somewhat to alleviate the wight at least.[54]

While no-one could claim that Flecknoe displays much of the wit which Butler brought to the "Character", Dryden's gibe in MacFlecknoe that he:

> In prose and verse was owned, without dispute,
> Through all the realms of nonsense, absolute (ll. 5-6)

may be reckoned almost as unfair as his treatment of Shadwell.

The Character of a Coffee-House, with the Symptoms of a Town-Wit (1673) was the first of a series of anonymous "Characters", which, although longer than Flecknoe's, condemned their victims more roundly and in a livelier style. The "Town-Wit" is described as:

> a kind of a Squib on a Rope, a meteor compos'd of Self-conceit and noise, that by blazing and crackling engages the wonder of the ignorant, till on a sudden he vanishes and leaves a stench, if not infection, behind him. (p. 4)

His progress is traced from the country to the town, where:

> three or four wilde Companions, half a dozen bottles of Burgundy, two leaves of Leviathan, a brisk encounter with his Landlords Glasswindowes, the charms of a little Miss, and the sight of a new Play dub'd him at once both a Wit and a Hero, ever since he values himself mainly for understanding the Town, and indeed knows most things in it, that are not worth knowing: The two Poles whereon all his discourses turn are Atheism and Bawdry; Bar him from being prophane or obscene, and you cramp his Ingenuity, which forthwith Flags and becomes useless, as a meer Common Lawyer when he has cross'd the Channel. (p. 4)

He asserts the antinomian view that human nature knows no distinction between the principles of good and evil, calls all women whores, and scoffs haughtily at religion, government, and other matters which smack of seriousness, though this is apparently to hide his own ignorance concerning them. He makes the obligatory profession of allegiance to Hobbes, however:

> 'Tis true he will not confess himself Atheist, yet in his heart the Fool hath said it, and boasts aloud that he holds his Gospel from the Apostle of Malmesbury, though it is more than probable he ne'er read, at least understood ten leaves of that unlucky Author. (p. 5)

The motif of the libertine's religion, which was soon to enjoy a great vogue, probably derives from Butler's Characters, where it is commonly employed to discredit both rakes and enthusiasts.

The year 1675 saw the appearance of The Character of a Town Gallant, The Character of a Town-Misse, and their respective "replies" - which makes that year the peak one for this particular type of

anonymous publication. The reply entitled News from Covent-Garden: or, The Town Gallants Vindication argues that satire on them is the price gallants have to pay to fortune "for those Transcendent Endowments which she has conferr'd upon us above Common Mortals: But this should not discourage us from pursuing the Liberty of our own exalted Genius". (p. 5) In other words the satire on the gallant is extended in the reply by the provision of an exaggeratedly egoistical persona, the gallant himself. To this extent the piece, which may have been written by the same hand as the original Character, marks an elaboration of Butler's method, in that it makes the actual character speak his own condemnation, as Rochester does with Mulgrave.*

The Character of a Town Gallant begins by defining its subject as "a Bundle of Vanity, composed of Ignorance, and Pride, Folly, and Debauchery; a silly Huffing thing, three parts Fop, and the rest Hector". (p. 2) Much of his behaviour, and especially his talk, is said to be exaggerated, as a result of his envy of the true, aristocratic rakes whom he apes. His deportment is made the occasion for a comparison between English native gallantry in the old sense, and French affectation. The suggestion is that French courtesy literature, as well as obscene French novels in translation, are responsible for the Gallant's behaviour, since both are to be found in his scanty library. The image of his mind as a room hung

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*See above, Chapter IV, pp. 214-6.

with Aretino's postures is copied from Flecknoe.* Yet this "Character", one of the most interesting and successful of any of them, displays quite a fair wit:

> His three Cardinal Vertues, being only Swearing, Wanching, and Drinking; and if other mens lives may be compared to a Play, his is certainly but a Farce, which is acted only on three Scenes: The Ordinary, the Play-house, and the Tavern. His Religion (for now and then he will be pratling of that too) is pretendedly Hobbian: and he Swears the Leviathan may supply all the lost Leaves of Solomon, yet he never saw it in his life, and for ought he knows it may be a Treatise about catching of Sprats, or new Regulating the Greenland Fishing Trade. (p. 7)

Nevertheless "the Rattle of it at Coffee-houses" has taught him to deny the existence of Heaven, Hell, or Angels, to joke about the Devil, and to argue that there is no essential difference between good and evil. This is another instance of Hobbes being blamed for a set of ideas which he was not only careful to disown, but which antedated him, as we have seen in the case of the Ranters.

The most prolific exponent of hudibrastic verse between Butler and Ned Ward was "Satyrical Dick"[55] Ames, a student of Lincolns Inn, whose recent description as "a poetaster almost exclusively concerned with wine and women",[56] is somewhat unfair. Like Ward, he satirises excess in these fields, and at his best extends his vista to include attacks on those who break the code of acceptable behaviour, as for example in Fatal Friendship; or, the Drunkards Misery: being a Satyr against Hard Drinking (1693). In Lawyerus Bootatus & Spurratus: or, the Long Vacation (1691) he admits as his mentors: "Cowley, Waller, Oldham, Cleave-/Land, and

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*See p.301 above.

beloved Hudibras" (p. 20), and many of his poems also have analogues in the Rochester canon, notably Islington-Wells (1691). True to type, he appears to have been converted too, though like Rochester and Oldham his attitude often appears ambivalent. In general he advocates responsible libertinism, like his greater masters, and he was in the vanguard of the opposition to the Society for the Reformation of Manners, formed in 1690, whose single-minded dedication to the suppression of vice drew forth the ridicule of the defenders of wit, such as Tom Brown.

The tone of Ames's satire is much more restrained than that of Oldham's early poems. His The Folly of Love. A New Satyr against Woman is not so bitter as Oldham's Satire upon a Woman. As its title implies, it is the latest addition to a series of verse satires on woman, recent examples of which were Gould's A Satyr against Woman (1680) and Love given over (1680), and Ames's reply, Sylvia's Revenge (1688). It was a series which proved popular for many years after Ames. Pope's second Moral Essay may owe some of its mildness to Gould's Consolatory Epistle to a Friend Made unhappy by Marriage. Or, A Scourge of ill Wives, which is much more general than Oldham's Satire upon a Woman, although each was directed against a particular woman who had caused harm to a friend (death in the case of Oldham's).

The Folly of Love, which may be viewed as a satirical counterpart to Sedley's Happy Pair, affords a most detailed account of the libertine version of the Fall, and it reads like a one-sided miniature Paradise Lost. Though written only for "Private Diversion"

(Preface, f. A2^{v}), its opening combines the beatus ille motif with two other traditional visions of past happiness, the Golden Age and the Earthly Paradise. The first lines set the tone:

> Happy was Man, when first by Nature made
> The welcome guest of Eden's blisful shade. (p. 1)

Man on his own was perfectly in tune with nature and the beasts. There were as yet no adverse forces to disturb his ease:

> Lord of himself, his passions not enslav'd,
> He nothing wanted, for he never crav'd. (p. 2)

The Devil's malicious envy of "This happyer Eden of Man's tranquil Mind" prompted him to create woman. Thereupon, in contrast to the previous harmony, "All Nature groan'd with a Prophetick fear" (p. 3). The misogynist speaker argues that this fear was well justified, for he blames on woman all the ills ensuing from the Fall.

Rather like St. Augustine, he wishes that "Fate would ... some better method find,/To propagate, and multiply Mankind" (p. 5), but since this is a vain hope he vows instead to display the sex in its true colours, and defies any man to love women after he has done this. He invokes in his aid:

> ... Satyr, thy severest Whip prepare
> To lash the sex so very vile yet fair. (p. 5)

There follows an extended attack on female vices, especially lust, which owes much to Gould, Rochester and Oldham. Pride also features prominently in this. The description of a woman removing her glass eye, and other artificial accoutrements which her affectation demands, looks forward to Swift's Nymph going to Bed; while the satire occasionally shows an epigrammatic precision worthy of Pope:

For tho' she may be vain and think to please,
Yet Fifty's an Incurable Disease. (p. 19)

The particular satire ends with another generalised denunciation of woman, the cynical conclusion being that no matter how deformed the woman may be, since beauty is in the eye of the beholder she will always find some "Fond Lover" who is blind to her defects. The speaker is scathing about such a "Lover"'s fate:

Let the deluded Fool go on, till's greatest curse
Be those few words, for better and for worse. (p. 21)

For himself, he yearns for some fertile island, which produces all the needs of life, as Eden did before the Fall, and particularly an inexhaustible supply of vines. This view of paradise is a mixture of pastoral frolicking and the exploits of the all-male drinking-club:

There with a Score of Choice Selected Friends,
Who know no private Interests nor Ends,
We'd Live, and could we Procreate like Trees,
And without Women Aid ----------
Promote and Propagate our Species;
The Day in Sports and innocent Delight
We'd spend, and in soft Slumber wast the Night:
Sometimes within a private Grotto meet,
With gen'rous Wines and Fruits our selves we'd Treat;
Ambition, Envy, and that Meager Train,
Should never interrupt our Peaceful Raign;
Blest with Strong Health, and a most quiet mind,
Each day our Thoughts should new Diversion find,
But never, never think on WOMEN-KIND. (p. 22)

Many of the elements of this paradise are already familiar to us. The point to notice here is that the speaker's defiance is outweighed by his sneaking realisation that the dream is impossible to fulfil. As with Oldham's Dream, there is a strong air of wishful thinking about it, but the wish derives from a ridiculous premise: "could we Procreate like Trees, ..." Indeed, Ames has his tongue firmly in

his cheek here, as he does in the other parodic denunciation of "Woman!" at the beginning of the poem. The central section can be read as an effective, if exaggerated satire of contemporary manners, for which the paradise motif acts as a framework. The speaker's somewhat Calvinistic revulsion for sex suggests that he might be intended as a satirical portrait of a "Reformer of Manners". Thus Ames exposes both extremes to ridicule, in classical manner.

The Rake: or, The Libertine's Religion (1693) is a rather rambling affair when compared to Ned Ward's similar hudibrastic on this subject. Many themes are common to both, and are often derived from earlier poems. The theme of age versus youth so striking in Oldham's Satyr, for example, appears on the title-page of The Rake in the form of a quotation from Ecclesiastes: "Rejoyce, O Young Man". This was by no means the last time that the Bible would supply the libertine with his text, but Ames's poem develops the metaphor of the libertine's religion more fully than most, for reasons which the Preface explains.* He has his rake launch at once into a celebration of youth as a time when it is fitting to indulge in pleasures, and the old men whom he ridicules bear some resemblance to Rochester's "formal band and beard" and to Butler's Character of "A Philosopher":

> How Grave those Dons of mighty Beards appear,
> (For round their Chins their Widdom lies)
> Who Youthful Joys perswade me to forbear ! (p. 2)

He alludes to Rochester's maimed debauchee for conduct becoming to an old man, laying down while he is still young a set of memories to sustain him when he is old and feeble:

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*See below, pp. 312-3.

I most industriously will try,
In Pleasures great Variety,
To taste the Marrow, and the Quintessence,
Which can be found in all the Joys of Sense.
But when in Age, the Palsie, Stone, or Gout
Shall wrack my Limbs, (which Heaven forbid) I then
Perhaps may rail at Pleasure, like these Men.
And tho' all Joys have left me far behind,
I'll chew the Cudd of Pleasure in my Mind,
And so at least in Thought I will be Young again. (p. 3)

As in The Folly of Love, the Fall is adduced as the source of the double curse, marriage. Anticipating an eighteenth century clergyman who seriously advocated fornication on the authority of Biblical commands,[57] this rake takes for his text "the first Blessing Heav'n bestow'd": "Increase and Multiply the Earth" (p. 12). His version of the Golden Age when this commandment was carried out perhaps owes something to Absalom and Achitophel:

But our fore-Fathers multiplied their kind,
On whom they pleas'd, not to one She confin'd;
Their Appetites by Nature's dictates mov'd,
They look'd, they lik'd, and whom they lik'd they lov'd.
What barbarous Age to Marriage then gave Birth,
That cursed Noose, that Antidote to Love ... (pp. 12-13)

This is the familiar libertine plea for freedom from the restricting confinement of the marriage bond, by nostalgically appealing to a combination of the classical Golden Age and the medieval garden of love.

The rake's round of pleasures bears out the suggestion in The Character of a Town Gallant that these are restricted to three scenes.* They follow a circular motion, from tavern to playhouse, to ordinary, and back to the tavern. The pleasures themselves are those of the Epicure:

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*See p.304 above.

Though Water, Earth and Air, ransackt I have,
To purchase what the Nicest Stomachs eat:
But what in Pleasure Eating does deny,
Most Noble Liquids shall the want supply. (p. 7)

He is a gourmand rather than a gourmet, setting quantity above quality:

No moral sure can of more Pleasures boast,
For Wine and Women do by turns supply
The Cravings of my Appetite. (p. 15)

Notwithstanding his own self-confessed priorities, in his pursuit of "Pleasures which only to the Wits are known" he is intolerant of those who do not share his vices, or his "wit", as he calls it:

While Plodding Sots all day on measures think,
(If they to thinking can pretend)
To save the Trash they have no heart to spend,
With Women, Wits, and Soul-inspiring Drink,
I push the tedious Minutes on; ... (p. 4)

Yet only a short time later he ironically admits that:

Thinking's the thing I most abhor:
Nor have I for this Twenty Years, or more,
Read any thing, except it were
A Song, Play, Novel, or Lampoon. (p. 9)

Ned Ward takes up this theme more effectively in The Libertine's Choice.

Like Oldham's Hector, this rake's ambition is to perform:

Some Daring Action, which may be
Recorded to Posterity;
A Deed, which shall with Terrour make,
The Sons of Midnight, wrapt in Flannel, quake. (p. 5)

The "Sons of Midnight" probably derive from Milton's and Dryden's "Sons of Belial". The rake arrogantly asserts that the pranks of gangs like the Scowrers are "low Mechanick Actions, most unfit/For Us the Sons of Fancy, Sense and Wit" (p. 6). This may be an attempt

by Ames to satirise the aristocratic assumption of their superiority shown by the rakes in the comedies, or the pretenders to gallantry who had always been ready to ape the Court Wits in real life. The terms in which the rake prays to the God of Wine would seem to bear this out. He hopes that as a result:

> Let loose to wild Extravagance we may
> Such a bold Action do, that all Mankind,
> When they have heard the Deed, may wond'ring say,
> What Men in Devil's Shapes this thing have wrought ?
> How could this Frolick enter in the Thought ?
> So lewd, they've even beyond Damnation sinn'd. (p. 6)

But such "Extravagance" had been satirised better by Shadwell in The Libertine and by Oldham in A Satyr against Vertue.

The balance is redressed to some extent in the latter part of the poem, where the rake is attacked by Conscience, an allegorical figure, which asks him, for example:

> Can you suppose, or did you e're believe,
> You were for nothing else design'd,
> Only for Pleasures sake to live ?
> And taste no Joy, but what in Sence you find ?
> If so, then ev'ry Brute you view,
> Is happier by far than you. (pp. 19-20)

Here again, Rochester and Oldham had made the same point better. By comparison, Ames's device of the rake's Conscience is a clumsy one. It puts forward the orthodox arguments, for example that man's reason exalts him above the beasts, although vice has caused him to fall below them. Then it launches into an extended attack on vice. Conscience urges the rake to overcome his prejudice against religion, and concludes the poem by exhorting him to "Repent betimes, before your Sun of Youth is set" (p. 24), pursuing a metaphor which the Preface of the poem had introduced. There the reader is warned

that the libertine's jollity "is but a kind of Grasshopper's Mirth; his unprovident Summers Chirping, brings him in the end to his Doleful Winter-starving". (f. $A2^r$)

The Preface avers that Ames had himself died a convert:

> And the Libertine dying first, he lived to write his own Elegy, to subscribe his Farewell to his falling Dagon, and to build new Altars to a fairer Divinity: And as such, you will find this Posthumous Piece, the Product of a double Conception: The Libertine Begins, but the Penitent Concludes. (f. $A2^v$)

This is consistent with his conclusion to The Female Fire-Ships (1691), occasioned by the experience of a friend:

> By contraries some things are best set off,
> For let the vicious libertines still scoff,
> If Strephon's happy in a Charming Bride,
> In lifes rough Seas with her we'll safely ride;
> While they poor daring rash unthinking Elves,
> Expose their Barks to Shipwracks, Rocks and Shelves, ... (p. 19)

We also find in the Preface to The Rake an explanation for the rake's intolerance. To account for the apparent contradiction in the subtitle of the poem, Ames says that even the grossest infidel invents his own gods, and that since devotion of some sort naturally follows the belief in a Heaven, so the libertine, who:

> makes Pleasure his Heaven, may be a Zealot and a Bigot, even to a Superstition in his own Profession; and not only bend the Knee, but prostrate the Affections, Heart and Soul, with all the most passionate Tenders of Worship and Adoration to his Darling Idolatry. As such then we presume to define our Libertine's Religion, and as such is our present Golden Image set up, and the following Io paeans to Pleasure and Licentiousness, are the Timbrels, Psaltries, and Sackbuts Playing before it. (f. $A2^r$).

This is about as specific an analogy between libertinism in its religious and irreligious phases as one encounters anywhere after the religious phase had in its true sense died.

In the Preface the libertine's religion is made the basic metaphor in what is effectively a "Character":

> A Libertine, that John Galloper that lights Life at both Ends, that drives like Phaeton, and generally drops like him too; by the Impulse of his Religion, looks up to Heaven for no other expected Blessing from it, but its Rain and its Sunshine, and considers the whole Creation as only his Garden and Confectionary, and the God of it as no more than his Providore. As such is his Religion, his whole Prayers have but this single Article, viz. Give us this Day our daily Riot; and his Thanksgivings are according; that is, if he has any. For looking upon All Things, the whole Product of Nature, as no less than his Right and Due, he considers the Ceremonial Complement of Thanks and Gratitude as an unnecessary Supererogation.
>
> However, to do Justice to our departed Author, the Rover held not out to his Catastrophe; we must declare he made his Exit to the World under some true Pangs of Conversion: ... (f. A2v)

All's well that ends well. Even the intrusion of the particular, alien to the "character" tradition, is compensated for by the generality of the conclusion to the Preface: "The Libertine Begins, but the Penitent Concludes".

The satiric character was one of Ned Ward's favourite genres, and his portrait of "A City Letcher", for example, although it contains more erudition and extended metaphor, remains basically a rather more "extravagant" version of earlier Characters. Ward's other great favourite was the satiric trip, and the volume in which the Characters first appeared was entitled The Rambling Rakes: or, London Libertines (1700). The title story concerns two rakes, who are separated in the course of their debauches, and later regale each other with their adventures. One, having made love to three sisters after promising each marriage, on finding that they are all pregnant now, compares himself to "that Heroick Libertine, Don John",[58] and extricates himself in like manner. His companion wanted above all to:

> continue a Fashionable Libertine, in a hot Pursuit of Vice, without any Cessation, least an Interval should cool me into Sober Reflecting on my past Lewdness, and make me fit for Bedlam, rather than a True Penitent. (p. 65)

He is soon saved from such uncomfortable thoughts by a "Stroling Strumpet." Some quite extraordinary adventures occur in this entertaining excursion through the town's low life.

The third work in this volume, Three Nights Adventures, stars a would-be rake from Ely en route to the Continent. The hero displays a considerable knowledge of libertine writings. He quotes Oldham's The Dream: "Oh do not, do not do not ----- let me go" (p. 88); Don John of Austria after enjoying Eboli in Otway's Don Carlos: "I've had a Feast,/Of which a God might covet for a Taste" (p. 94); and he refers to Jacomo in Shadwell's The Libertine (pp. 103-4). However, as a result of his adventures he repents and returns to the country. The volume is completed by A Step to the Bath, about a traveller's campaign to seduce a widow during a journey on a stagecoach. Although the fifth edition was entitled The Libertines: or, The Vices of the Age Expos'd, salaciousness often appears a stronger motive than satire in these tales.

Ward's talent finds better expression in his verse satire The Libertine's Choice: or, The Mistaken Happiness of the Fool in Fashion (1700). This poem is much more subtle than his Characters and Journeys, because in it he applies Rochester's technique of using the actual arguments of the orthodox, so that their position is ridiculed in the poem, besides that of the libertine. Since the rake's life-style is manifestly anti-social, the poem works dramatically,

setting up a tension between two points of view, neither of which is the satirist's. In addition, Ward has widened the scope of the epithet Libertine to cover, for example, those who amass fortunes by fraud, enabling him to include some incidental satire on manners reminiscent of Rochester's Tunbridge Wells. Another important point is that Ward makes the libertine spokesman in the poem comparatively cultured, unlike the foppish anti-intellectual of the Characters. At one stage he defends Shakespeare against the "French Jack-Puddings" which are inundating the stage, and he upholds good plain English meat from the foreign sauces beloved by "Fop Epicures" (p. 10). His patriotism makes him in some sense endearing, like Faulconbridge the Bastard in King John, or Swift's preference for roast beef rather than fricassees and ragouts. On the other hand, some of his ideas are plainly ridiculous, and he lacks consistency as a character. However, it is not Ward's intention that the reader should uncritically identify with him.

The libertine quickly establishes himself as an Epicurean, a naturalist and a sceptic. His opening lines argue that the godly have imposed a set of unnatural rules on the young, because they are now too old to enjoy those pleasures "As Nat'ral as your Appetites to eat", which they formerly indulged freely:

> Let Holy Guides prevail on Tim'rous Fools,
> T'abridge their Pleasure, and conform to Rules,
> Impos'd on Youth, by hoary Heads long since,
> When dwindl'd into Age and Impotence;
> Hating their Vig'rous Progeny should taste
> Those Lushious Joys their own weak Loins were past;
> Who in their Strength did Nature's Will obey,
> And ne'er grew Temp'rate till their Hairs grew Grey. (p. 3)

In contrast to Rochester's maimed debauchee, who, in his days of impotence, is afforded some respite from his pains by watching "the battles you maintain", the envy of the old men to "Behold past Blessings which you can't enjoy" is here denounced as "Devil-like". (p. 4)

The libertine adds his unorthodox interpretation of the Fall to his analogy with the Devil. The old men have introduced the concept of guilt:

> And give us, by false Tales, an ill Conceit
> Of Pleasures which your selves once found so sweet.
> Such Usage seem'd as if you aim'd to gain
> That Power o'er Youth, as Satan did o'er Man:
> And by the subtile Force of your Advice,
> Move us to lose our present Paradise,
> Thro' hopes of future Joys beyond the Skies.
> Th' Infernal Tempter cunningly began
> With Stratagems like these to ruin Man.
> To this effect the Treach'rous Serpent said,
> Take, Eat this Fruit; do but as I perswade,
> And from this happy Moment you shall prove,
> Wise and Immortal as the Gods above:
> But when the cunning Fiend had made them eat,
> They found the Lushious Promise but a Cheat. (p. 5)

In view of this, it is no surprise that the libertine is sceptical of "your Sage Advice,/To quit known Pleasures for uncertain Bliss", since:

> If we those Blessings you report, pursue;
> We loose the present Joys within our View,
> When those you promise mayn't perhaps accrue. (p. 5)

Even if man can have any clear prospect of a life after death, no matter how devout he is he cannot claim to deserve the gift of Heaven, and must accept whatever the Gods send him.

Next the libertine criticises those "Guides of Old" who teach man to despise terrestrial joys, to drink water rather than wine, for example. They "Tell us soft Beauty's but a Charming Evil,/That

all Delights are Off-springs of the Devil". The libertine argues that it is ill-manners to cast aspersions on:

> Blessings which we find oblige our Taste:
> And highly Impious to condemn as vain,
> What the kind Gods for Humane Use ordain. (p. 6)

He turns the argument of orthodox religion on its head, using its words, such as "impious" and "blessings" for his own ends. He claims that it is rude and offensive to refuse "What Bounteous Heav'n has giv'n for our Delight". He goes on to ask why, "if I've an Appetite to eat", he should prefer roots and herbs to better meat, or why he should drink water when he "lust[s] for Wine". Leave water to "dull Bigots", he cries, and proclaims that "Bacchus shall be the Jolly God for me". Here he speaks like a typical rake, no longer arguing by speciously using religious terms, but professing his true creed, albeit a kind of debased "religion", as the by now familiar metaphor would have it. It includes, naturally, free love, in the performance of which the partners:

> ... mutually approve
> The Works of Heav'n in the Delights of Love,
> Love! which sublimes the Blessings we pursue,
> And makes the Gods well pleas'd with what we do. (p. 6)

The libertine then pictures an "Old Cinick (from the world retir'd)", who, living a Spartan life himself, rails at the pleasures which he sees youth indulge in, and of which he is no longer capable. Here the Cynic's austerity is compared to the behaviour of the vicious:

> Thus like Town Bullies his Ill-Nature shew,
> Who damn those Beauties which they can't subdue. (p. 7)

The speaker thus makes it clear that he is not the hectoring kind of rake, and it is another example of his apt use of the unexpected.

Having rejected the Cynics' morality, he pronounces himself an Epicure, shunning retirement, one of the ideals of a more refined, acceptable Epicureanism:

> Who else aan fancy true Felicity,
> Consist in stinking Rags and Poverty;
> And that a scanty Meal is better far,
> Than all the costly Dainties we prepare;
> That nothing truly can afford Content,
> But cold Retirement, and a self Restraint. (p. 7)

The libertine may be voicing Ward's own preference for the pleasures of motion rather than those of rest, but probably he also does not know what true Epicureanism entails.

Although the libertine speaks for Ward at least some of the time, he is parading his own ignorance rather than Ward's (though Ward was not an educated man) when he professes allegiance to Lucretius and makes him responsible for the caricature of the libertine's creed which follows:

> O Great Lucretius, thou shalt be my Guide,
> Like thee I'll live, and by thy Rules abide:
> Measure my Pleasures by my Appetites,
> And unconfin'd, pursue the World's Delights.
> For Liberty makes every Action sweet,
> And relishes our Joys, as Salt our Meat:
> Without, we no true Happiness could boast,
> The Taste of every Blessing would be lost,
> The sweetest Bliss, would but a Slav'ry prove,
> And we should then but hate what now we love.
> My Native Freedom, therefore I'll employ,
> Chuse what I like, and what I like, enjoy. (pp. 7-8)

He values "Beauty much, but Freedom more". Although he appreciates womankind, he prefers freedom, so naturally he opposes marriage:

> The Bait I'll nibble, but the Hook avoid;
> For cold Restraint makes every thing seem worse,
> And often turns our Blessings to a Curse. (p. 8)

He is honest enough to admit that it is not in his own nature to be constant, but he refuses to deceive women by false oaths and vows:

> If the kind Nymph will yield to my Desires,
> And with her Favours quench Loves pleasing Fires;
> I'll not with Oaths and Vows her Faith deceive,
> But prove as kind as Nature gives me leave;
> Be constant too, as long as e'er I can,
> But will not promise to be more than Man:
> And when I'm tir'd, that she the Truth may know,
> I'll frankly, without Flatt'ry, tell her so.
> Thus would I deal with Love's Rebellious Flame,
> When cloy'd with one, I'd still pursue fresh Game;
> And not enslave my self, or yet deceive the Dame. (pp. 8-9)

Variety being the key to enjoyment:

> From Am'rous Sports to th' Bottle I'd repair,
> To fill those Veins I'd empty'd with the Fair;
> Drink till my Wits were ripe, and Brains were full,
> For to be sober, is but to be dull. (p. 9)

His evening in the tavern with fellow "wits" is satisfactorily concluded by window-breaking, watch-beating, and "fresh Mischiefs". At dawn, "Drowsie and drunk we'd stagger to our Beds", arising in time for the opening of the play-house.

The diversions which the play-house affords are the occasion for some lively social satire, and provide the libertine the opportunity to denounce the debased taste in plays, and, perhaps rather inconsistently in view of the ignorance and the proclivities he had expressed earlier, to compare the preference for "French Jack-Puddings" over "Immortal Shakespeare" to the jaded palate of the Epicure:

> So Nice Fop Epicures disdain to eat,
> Without some Foreign Sauce, true English Meat;
> And think thro' a Mistake the wholesome Food,
> Cannot without such paultry Stuff be good;
> When all their ill-mix'd Rareties at last
> Spoil the Regale, and but confound the Taste. (p. 10)

This patriotic attitude, taken with the libertine's pride in his "Native Freedom", seems to bear out D.F. Foxon's remarks on the relation of libertine literature to liberty of a religious, political, and finally sexual nature.[59] The presence of a political element in the satire is readily seen when the libertine's visit to a brothel provokes a parody of Volpone's encomium on gold (p. 11). Next, having bought a coach with his winnings at the gaming house, he boasts that he is now able to

> ... laugh at Honest Fools that walk on Foot,
> Contented to be poor for Conscience sake,
> Whilst Libertines by Fraud their Fortunes make. (p. 12)

Here the range of the satire is extended to include the growing number of people who were amassing fortunes not just at the gaming tables, but by preying on the public's gullibility in the mania for speculation which had markedly increased during the later years of the century, and which would reach epidemic proportions before the bubble burst in 1720. With the rise of middle-class acquisitiveness came the movement to reform manners. Ward is showing that this is hypocritical, just as the extremes of aristocratic libertinism are futile and self-defeating.

The libertine again exerts a positive influence when he denounces bullies who prey on those who have nothing to lose. He himself envisages becoming rich at the expense of the wealthy, and in a libertine version of Robin Hood, declares:

> I'd build an Alms-House for each cast-off Whore,
> And as I'd gull'd the Rich, I'd feed the Poor. (p. 13)

He would set up a brothel for the old and deformed, using his money to bribe "Irish Stallions .../To please the Lame, Blind, Ugly and the Old";

Thus every Hump and Squinny should enjoy,
As much of Love as they could well employ. (p. 13)

However, his motive here seems to be pride, the desire to be given credit for bringing happiness to those who would not otherwise enjoy it. If his trickery owes something to Jonson's rogues, his self-satisfaction shows him to be a precursor of the self-styled "preserver of the nation" of Swift's Modest Proposal.

This ambition, or pride, finds further expression in the libertine's emulation of his social superiors. "Like Quality the Sunday would I spend", he crows, and "modishly profess" religion. He would go "To Church, where Hypocrites in Clusters meet" (p. 13). This enables him, while displaying his own affectation of aristocratic manners, to describe the other hypocrites he sees doing the same. It is also an ideal opportunity for him to observe which of the ladies has "a Lustful Air, and Tempting Face" (p. 14). Having singled out "some fam'd Intriguing Lady", and "Invited by her Eyes and some kind Smile", he is able, for the price of sitting through a tedious sermon, to "lay the Ground-work of a new Debauch". This accomplished, he returns to his proper milieu:

Then to some Rakish Friends my course I'd steer,
Strangers to Faith, and Enemies to Fear;
There Ridicule with them the Canting Priest,
And make Religion but our common Jest;
Raise up dead Hobs to justifie our Cause,
And overthrow Divine, by Nature's Laws;
Burlesque the Scriptures, and asperse the Creed,
Aw'd by no musty Rules; Love, Drink and Feed:
This is the happy Life we Modish Rakes would lead. (p. 15)

Thus this poem, which satirises so many different types, ends, as it began, by caricaturing the libertine position.

Though superficially similar to Ned Ward in attitude, the greater variety and overall quality of his literary output mark that "underestimated poet and commentator"[60] Tom Brown as Ward's superior. In contrast to Ward, whose ambition seems to have been satisfied by his acquisition of a tavern,[61] Brown shows evidence of considerable scholarship and a more sophisticated, satirical wit. Of all the libertine writers in "that period, still wanting a name, from 1680 to 1700"[62], he comes nearest to the spirit of the great eighteenth century satirists. But he lacks their intensity, for his main influences were the French wits who figure largely amongst his translations, and the libertine songs and satires of the previous generation.

In such pieces as The Charms of the Bottle, In Praise of the Bottle, A Song, The Whet, and The Good Fellow, Brown argues the superiority of drinking rather than wenching, like a host of other drinking songs, by Oldham and lesser writers. His priorities are expressed conventionally, for example in The Libertine. A Song:

> No, Madam, I'm free; when I'm recreant again,
> Let me, unpity'd, feel again my old pain.
>
> I'll libertine turn, use all things in common;
> No more than one dish, be bound to one woman;
> Yet I'll still love the sex, but my bottle before 'em;
> I'll use 'em sometimes, but I'll never adore 'em.
> Go, Madam, be wise: When a woodcock's i' th' noose,
> Be sure hold him fast, lest like me he gets loose.[63]

Consistency would make these too predictable, so some lyrics celebrate more carnal joys. Sometimes Brown employs the double entendre, as in The General Lover, whose "heart" is so large that he has sworn allegiance to six mistresses:

So large is the Place, and so plenteous my Store,
I with Ease can provide for six Mistresses more,
Nay, if you distrust me, e'en send me a Score. (I, p. 123)

Similarly, Cupid turn'd Tinker ends:

Where he stops up one Hole,
'Tis true, by my Soul,
He'll at least leave a Score in the Place on't. (I, p. 122)

The familiar libertine heroes also reappear. In The Pleasures of Love. A Song, it is Jove, for whom "Nature turn'd Bawd":

Were I but he, my boundless Reign shou'd prove
But one continu'd Scene of Love,
In Extasies I wou'd dissolving lie,
As long as all the mighty Round of vast Eternity. (I, p. 120)

Brown's use of the bawdy includes the assertion made in To a young Lady, who appeared frequently leaning out of her Chamber Window that rather than the drunkard's preference for wine, he would prefer to taste "Some Drops from that dear shady Well". (I, p. 74)

One of the most successful of his early lyrics is To a Lady, whom he refus'd to Marry, because he lov'd her. The libertine strains of its opening lines should by now sound very familiar:

Marriage ! the greatest Cheat that Priesthood e'er contriv'd,
The sanctify'd Intrigue, by which poor Man's decoy'd.
That damn'd Restraint to Pleasure and Delight,
Th' unlawful Curber of the Appetite.
Curst be the Sot that first the Chains put on,
That added to the Fall, and made us twice undone,
The Sex that liv'd before in a free common State,
Or Golden Age, ne'er knew this Pious Cheat;
Then Love was unadulterate and true,
Then we did unconfin'd Amours pursue.
If by his Flame the Shepherd was inspir'd,
On no coy Trifles the kind Nymph retir'd;
The officious Trees pimp'd for the honest Trade,
And form'd a very kind and welcome Shade.
Then, like the bord'ring Fields, was Womankind
By no Land-marks, or unjust Bounds inclin'd. (I, p. 152)

Besides the obvious libertine antipathy to marriage, one might remark the novel use made of the landscape of retirement for satirical ends:

one of the metaphors in the last line is a protest against the enclosure movement; while the other perhaps criticises man's despoliation of the natural environment. But the witty twist in the poem's closing lines is that of the Cavalier's love poem to his mistress:

> 'Tis true, if that, by my ill Stars inclin'd,
> So great a Trespass I shou'd e'er commit,
> Your Charms alone would change my Mind,
> And tempt me to the Sin, tho' mighty 'tis and great:
> For you'd with vigorous Beauty still incite
> The pall'd and wearied Appetite.
> And what's a mortal Sin with any other she,
> To do with you, a Venial Fault wou'd be. (p. 152)

The Beauties, to Armida also has traditional elements. Here the libertine, having prayed to the God of Love to make one woman for him to be constant to, finds happiness with Armida. (I, pp. 47-50) On the other hand, in A Satire on Marriage (I, pp. 64-5) the libertine is unable to make love to his wife on account of his extramarital activities; and A Satire against Woman (I, pp. 60-4) accuses women of unnamable lusts and curses them as bitterly as similarly titled dirae by Oldham and others. Brown's poems express a variety of points of view on the part of their speakers.

Brown's reputation as a prose writer is more surely based. An Oration in Praise of Drunkenness ... in the Time of the Act is one of those pieces of his whose exaggeration seems designed to outrage the Reformers of Manners. Its speaker acknowledges himself "of no Sect but that of Epicurus, whose druncken Atoms reel'd into Order, and fram'd a World infinitely beautiful. A World that produces Ten Thousand Pleasures, but none so agreeable as those that proceed from the soft Enchantment of the Vine". His denial that he is a sectary perhaps suggests that he is intended to represent an enthusiast, or

at least a fanatical reformer, and this impression is reinforced when he advocates "a Cup of the Creature", which is the language of the Ranters. He represents wine as an elixir for both young and old, and recommends emulating such ancient drinkers as Heliogobalus, Prometheus and Anacreon. His arguments include the pure carpe diem: "Let us Drink then, my Friends, for tomorrow we may die". Like Oldham, he also asserts that the Drunkard, having most liberty, is excused from the law (a kind of civil antinomianism), and that drunken men "enjoy all the Sweets of an unbounded Liberty". The conclusion he draws from his analysis of liberty is patently specious, however:

> It must be confess'd that the Notion of Liberty is deeply imprinted in our Hearts, there being certainly nothing more advantagious, nothing more beneficial, more pleasing and agreeable to Human Reason. 'Tis Liberty that by its Origin and Excellency imparts to us a great Resemblance, and, as it were, unites us with the Divine Nature itself: For the Gods, tho' they enjoy immense Pleasures, yet their highest Excellency consists in having their Will unlimited by any superior Power. (I, pp. 38-9)

Brown is satirising the Reformers by associating them with antinomians and with the egoistic iconoclasm of the Restoration libertine - both, of course, positions which they opposed. In addition there is a sense in which Brown is making a sincere plea for a large part of the liberty his speaker praises so exaggeratedly. When does liberty become licence ? This was a question which came to be raised increasingly during the eighteenth century, most notably in the case of John Wilkes, whose political career may be instructively compared with James Nayler's in the religious sphere.

In The Temperate Epicure, an imitation of a poem written by "that Celebrated Wit of France, Monsieur la Fountaine", Brown anticipates a development in poetry of the eighteenth century which would replace Epicureanism with a physico-theological expression of the belief that one could approach a knowledge of God through an appreciation of nature.[64] Rather than write, he says, it is better:

> To read the World's amazing Book,
> And Nature's mystick Springs to know,
> And the vast Mind that does bestow
> Motion and Life on all below. (I, p. 76)

Typically, there is a realistic and bitter note in Brown's poem. Although "Joys we may taste a thousand Ways", by river or in shade, we must not stay long with the fair, lest we fall in love; and he wishes that it were as easy to be rid of his resultant painful disease as it is to send the whores to the West Indies. On the facing page is a picture of Epicurus, with the caption "virtus mihi Sola Voluptas". It is an ironic juxtaposition as well as a kind of last fling for Epicureanism, for in this poem we can see the deistic world view replacing the Epicurean emphasis on voluptuous (or virtuous) retirement.

The inconsistency of Brown's libertinism may sometimes be accounted for by the fact that he is translating. Contradictory advice on the respective pleasures of drink and sex is given from one piece to another. Thus in contrast to An Oration in Praise of Drunkenness, Melanissa to Alexis, from A Collection of Original Letters, describes the dangers of drinking, but the delights of love, in an attempt:

> ... to shew what a vast Difference there is between a Night murder'd in the Excess of Wine, and a Night Consecrated to Love ... Tho' no Truth is more evident than this, yet our Youth, possess'd by what fatal Stupidity I cannot tell, generally sacrifice to the Deity, who rewards the most constant Worshippers the worst. Instead of following the Dictates of Nature, whom they ought to obey, they treat her like an Enemy, and profane those Temples where they ought to pay their Devotions. (I, p. 200)

Most of Aristoenetus's Epistles are on the subject of love, its pleasures or its pains, and some are rich in epigram, for example "Honour is an unequal Match for Inclination at any Hour of the Day, but especially of the Night". (I, p. 269) Brown's free translation gives us such contemporary metaphors as "that Latitudinarian of a Lover" (I, p. 268) - an image which Brown, a staunch Tory, uses more polemically in A Character of a Low-Church Magistrate: "A Latitudinarian is a walking Amsterdam of Religions, out of whom all the Ancient and Modern Heresies might be easily retrieved ..." (IV, p. 337). This is comparable to Butler's definition of a Latitudinarian as "but a Kind of a modest Ranter".*

Many of Brown's pieces expose hypocrisy. To Walter Knight tells of a journey to London by stage coach, where the journey is the opportunity for a seduction, as in Ward's Step to the Bath. The chief passenger is a Captain, who has "made it his particular Business to study Women" (I, p. 223). He recounts all the techniques of seduction, asserting that "Spinoza and Vanninus never made a quarter so many Atheists as Love". (p. 225) He also claims that the profession of religion is a great help in seduction, and tells a story to show that even the godly are not immune - all somewhat reminiscent of Henry Miller. Similar observations about women occur

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*See above, Chapter I, p.22.

in Philocorus to Polycenus, one of Aristoenetus's Epistles, which concludes: "there is no Garrison so strong, and no Woman so obstinately virtuous, but by one Practice or other, both may be brought to take a new Master". (I, p. 252) Brown's translation of Fontenelle's letter To Monsieur de T-- contains the wry statement that "A Woman is easily persuaded to be complaisant to her Body, when she is told, that 'tis for the Health of her Soul", (I, p. 356). Many of Brown's best witticisms on this subject are to be found in his Table Talk, or, Short Amusements. Here, for example, he observes that: "Vice passes safely under the Disguise of Devotion; as during the late War, French Wine, under another Name, escaped the Custom-House". (I, p. 160)

Brown's best known work is Amusements, Serious and Comical (1700). Here Brown employs Ward's device of the trip, but the result is more satirical and less sensational than The London Spy. This is owing partly to the innocent "Indian" through whose eyes many of the sights are viewed, and partly to Brown's idiosyncratic selection of "Amusements". Characteristically, on their way from the decadent world of the coffee house, the pair pass a mountebank on a stage, call in first at a Quaker meeting, then at a Presbyterian one, and finally sit through a sermon by a dogmatic Anglican (III, pp. 71-8). Brown had evidently noted the technique of juxtaposition, as well as the choice of material, in Swift's Tale of a Tub.

Once again, too, the "Character" method is much in evidence in some of the sketches, notably Amusement IV. The Play-House (pp. 37-43), which has the epigrammatic quality of The Character of a

Coffee-House and its companion pieces of the 1670's. This is also true of A Walk round London and Westminster, exposing the Vices and Follies of the Town. Here the inquisitive Indian, contemptuously referred to as "the Smoak-dry'd Infidel", is forced to suffer (besides other indignities) grinning "like a Sun-burnt Ploughman at a Mountebank-Oration" through his companion's account of a tavern, which begins:

> ... a Tavern is a little Sodom, where as many Vices are daily practis'd, as ever were known in the great one; Thither Libertines repair to drink away their Brains, and piss away their Estates; Aldermen, to talk Treason, and bewail the loss of Trade; Saints, to elevate the Spirit, hatch Calumnies, coin false News, and reproach the Church; ... Rakes with their Whores, that by the help of Wine they may be more Impudent and more Wicked, and do those things in their Cups, that would be a Scandal to Sobriety; Lovers with their Mistresses, in hopes to wash away that Modesty with the Soothing Juice, which had been a hindrance to their Happiness, so that they may fall too without Grace, and give a pleasing Earnest to each other of their future Affections: ... (p. 277)

The Character method gives place to more particular satire in The Presbyterian Meeting-House, for the preacher is identified by name as Daniel Burgess. The nonconformists are represented as praying "in an unknown Tongue, or at least in a Jargon neither understands; for Sense in their Prayer, as well as in their Sermon, would savour too much of Human Invention, and not give latitude enough for Enthusiasm and Cant". (p. 284) This sketch has affinities with both Hudibras and Swift's Mechanical Operation of the Spirit. It is perhaps surpassed, however, by The Quakers-Meeting, which follows. "This Sect", we are told, "arose from Nailer,* as the Presbyterians and Independents from the Jesuits". (p. 289) The next piece, The Bawdy-House (p. 294), though it represents an

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* Cf. one of the Letters from the Dead to the Living, From J. Naylor, to his Friends at the Bull and Mouth (II, p. 263). Brown's political proclivity is displayed in Ludlow the Regicide to the Calves-Head-Club (II, p. 257).

intentional progression, is almost an anticlimax by comparison. In general, however, the Amusements juxtapose scenes as well as satirical methods. The result is a varied and entertaining tour through London's low life, but with a more satirical, less purely salacious bent, than Ward has to offer. This is in keeping with Brown's reputation, more sophisticated and "facetious" (as Addison called it) than Ward's.

3 Reformation of Manners

John Evelyn noticed a different moral climate as soon as Charles II was buried.[65] Gilbert Burnet records that King James, some days after his accession, promised the Queen and his Priests that he would no longer see his mistress Catherine Sedley, by whom he had some children:

> And he spoke openly against leudness, and expressed a detestation of drunkenness. He sate many hours a day about business with the Council, the Treasury, and the Admiralty. It was upon this said, that now we should have a reign of action and business, and not of sloth and luxury, as the last was. ... And thus he began his reign with some fair appearances.[66]

Despite his announcement of a sterner new morality, the King continued to see Mrs. Sedley in private. As we shall see, this somewhat hypocritical course of action was quite in keeping with what Sir Charles Sedley (Catherine's father), comparing it to the vagaries of the English weather, called "This suddain change" in sensibility. Although he personally was "very unhappy, that the Ice that has borne so many Coaches and Carts, shou'd break with my Wheel barrow",[67] he was remarking a major change in public taste.

The movement accelerated in the next reign, when William and Mary gave the Monarchy's more positive support to the Society for the Reformation of Manners. Formed in London in 1690 by "Five or six private Gentlemen, Members of the Church of England", it was "designed to controul Looseness, and to prevent the Youth of the City from being spoilt by Harlots and loose Women, and from spending their Time in Taverns or Ale-houses, and distempering themselves by Excess of Drink, and breaking the Sabbath".[68] It aimed "To be diligent in the Execution of the Penal-Laws against Prophaneness and Debauchery, for the Effecting a National Reformation".[69] The Society published annual accounts to show their success in achieving prosecutions. Josiah Woodward boasts of "Seventy or Eighty Warrants a week having been executed on these Offenders, in and about this City only ... some Thousands of Lewd Persons have been Imprisoned, Fined, and Whipt; ..."[70] By 1701 Dr. White Kennet, later Bishop of Peterborough, was able to claim in a sermon that "more than thirty thousand Persons had been convicted by this means for profane Cursing and Swearing; and near the same number of Lewd and Disorderly Persons brought to a merciful Punishment, and were thereby reclaimed from their Vices, or restrained from the Publick Scandal of them".[71] Strype quotes The Fourteenth Account of the Progress of the Societies (1709) as totalling 2,349 for the previous year, and this seems to be about the average for a year.[72] But it was only the poor who suffered, and not the influential, as Defoe forcefully complained in his satire Reformation of Manners (1702):

> Your Annual Lists of Criminals appeare,
> But no Sir Harry or Sir Charles is there.
> Your Proclamations Rank and File appear,
> To Bug-bear Vice, and put Mankind in fear:
> These are the Squibs and Crackers of the Law,
> Which hiss and make a Bounce, and then withdraw.[73]

His point is that the law is ineffectual, that "'tis Example must reform the Times". Nevertheless, in their first forty-four years the Societies prosecuted 101,683 persons in London alone.[74]

There were Royal proclamations against immorality in January 1692, February 1698, December 1699, March 1702 and February 1703,[75] Queen Anne continuing the Sovereign's encouragement of the Societies; Parliament passed an Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness, to back up the Royal proclamations.[76] Not that laws did not already exist: Woodward, in "An Abstract of the Penal-Laws against Immorality and Prophaneness" (1699), lists thirty-eight of them.[77] The problem was rather one of enforcement.

As might be expected, the Society's design to enforce the laws was at first violently opposed by "the Champions and Advocates for Debauchery", as Strype calls them.[78] But the opposition seems to have had a reasonable case. Tom Brown, in Letters from the Dead to the Living exposes the "Troops of Informers" willing to "serve God for Gain", who would "pick harmless words out of Plays to indite the Players and squeez[e] Twenty Pound a Week out of them".[79] He represents the Reformers as abusing their position, rather like the growing numbers of Projectors, who also played on human frailties: "Nay Reformation is grown a staple Commodity, and the dealers in it are suddenly to be made into a Corporation, and their privileges peculiar are to be Perjury without Punishment, and Lying with

Impunity" (p. 72). As regards their "Progress in the Extirpation of Vice; they have only beat it out of one part of the Town, to make it settle in another". More rhetorically, he asks, "what have they done after all the Noise and Sermons, and the Thanks of those worshipful Tools, the Grand Jury of Middlesex ? They have forc'd a few poor Whores to shift their Quarters".[80]

In an additional volume of Letters from the Dead to the Living (1702), by Brown and his fellow wits, Charles Montague goes further in exposing the hypocrisy of the Reformers, represented in the person of the enthusiastic preacher Daniel Burgess, "of the Militant Church of Russell-Court", in a letter to the Regicide Hugh Peters:

> This, Sir, puts me in mind of a Project that in part owes its Original to me, and that is to engross all the Whores of the Town, and make them all dependant on Us. To this end we have some-time since set up Societies for the Reformation of Manners, as we pretend, tho' the certain means of debauching the whole Town in time, by making them know, that Sin has abundantly a better Relish, heighten'd with the Sauce of Hypocrisy, than a barefac'd Offence. (p. 119)

He goes on to prove that the result is quite the opposite of what the Societies claim:

> Thus does Fornication multiply by the pains of the Reformers, and the Whore that before sinn'd perhaps once a Month, must now turn up ten times a Day to get New Cloathes and Bread; so that you may see how our Society are no Enemies to the grand Affair, and that they serve the D---l in G--d's Name, by putting the poor Whores out of a Capacity of ever quitting their Sins; which they are oblig'd, by multiplying to make so habitual, that they become Inseparable, and Natural. (pp. 120-1)

Montague takes up the theme again in another letter. (pp. 133 ff.)

Defoe ridicules the "wondrous Tales of Reformation" in his Reformation of Manners, the most comprehensive and intelligent attack on the Societies and their ethos. As he had in The Poor Man's Plea (1698) (p. 10), he complains of the class bias with which the laws are enforced: "none but Men of Quality may swear" (p. 403). We may remember that the Ranters were prosecuted for swearing, but not the aristocratic Cavaliers (known to their opponents as the "Dammees"), who were prone, as Butler said: "In Damme at once to curse, and swear, and rant."* Defoe takes up the charges of corruption and hypocrisy which Brown and Montague had implied:

> How Publick Lewdness is expell'd the Nation,
> That Private Whoring may be more in fashion.
> How Parish Magistrates, like pious Elves,
> Let none be Drunk a Sundays, but themselves.
> And Hackney Coach-men durst not Ply the Street
> In Sermon-time, till they had paid the State. (p. 404)

He substantiates these allegations by naming names. Judge Salathiel Lovell, who "never hangs the Rich, nor saves the Poor", is instanced as operating a protection racket for robbers (p. 405), and taking pleasure in insulting the wretches he condemns to daath (pp. 405-6). Jeffries (p. 404) and Furnese (pp. 406-7) are both lechers. The latter abuses his position in order to:

> Take Money of the Rich, and hang the Poor,
> And lash the Strumpet he debauch'd before. (p. 407)

Cole (pp. 407-8) and Clayton (pp. 408-9) are indicted for their lechery and avarice. Defoe sees avarice as a concomitant of his

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*See above, Chapter I, p. 67.

society's emphasis on acquisitiveness, and he launches into an exposé of "all the Tricks and Cheats of Trade" (pp. 412 ff).

In the conclusion of Part I Defoe returns to his main theme to show that just as there is one law for the rich and another for the poor, so in the same way Magistrates and other self-styled guardians of public morals can hypocritically pursue vice with impunity. This makes the satirist's task more necessary, but also much more dangerous:

> Blackbourn with far less hazard may blaspheme,
> Than thou mayest, Satyr, trace thy Noble Theme:
> The search of Vice more Hazard represents
> From Laws, from Councils, and from Parliaments.
> Thou may'st be wicked, and less danger known,
> Than by informing others they are so:
> Thou canst no Peer, no Counsellor expose,
> Or dress a vicious Member in his proper Cloaths;
> But all the Bombs and Canon of the Law,
> Are soon drawn out to keep thy Pen in awe:
> By Laws Post Facto thou may'st soon be slain,
> And Inuendo's shall thy Guilt explain.
> Thou mayst Lampoon, and no Man will resent;
> Lampoon but Heaven, and not the Parliament:
> Our Trusties and our Welbelov'ds forbear;
> Thou'rt free to banter Heaven, and all that's there;
> The boldest Flights thou'rt welcome to bestow
> O' th' Gods above, but not the God's below.
> Blackbourn may banter Heaven, and Asgill Death,
> And Toland poyson Souls with his infected Breath.
> No Civil Government resents the Wrong;
> But all are touch'd and angry at thy Song. (pp. 415-6)

Despite all these abuses, Defoe courageously maintains his belief in the efficacy of satire at least to expose the vice, though not to correct it:

> Thy Friends without the help of Prophesie,
> Read Gaols and Gibbets in thy Destiny;
> But Courage springs from Truth, let it appear,
> Nothing but Guilt can be the Cause of Fear;
> Satyr go on, thy keenest Shafts let fly,
> Truth can be no Offence to Honesty;
> The Guilty only are concern'd, and they
> Lampoon themselves, when e're they censure thee. (p. 416)

Soon he would suffer for this stance, ironically under several of those very judges whom he had satirised.[81]

In Part 2 Defoe deals with the particular vices of the Country and the Court, as he had exposed those of the City in Part 1. He then turns to the general, to advance positive prescriptions of his own for a true Reformation. This section contains two lengthy attacks, the first on Drink (pp. 429-32), the other on the Hypocrisy of those, whatever their religion,

> Whom Zeal divides, and Wickedness unites,
> Who in Profession only are precise,
> Dissent in Doctrine, and conform in Vice. (p. 432)

From his remarks on what constitutes true Religion, there follow a series of couplets contrasting Virtue and Vice (pp. 434-5). Defoe then returns to satire on individual prelates to demonstrate "what Rakes the Care of Souls possess". (p. 438) It does not matter, he says, "who are low Church Rakes and who are high". (p. 439) He completes this parallel by turning to the secular rakes, including Dorset and others of the older generation, as well as the younger "Beau's at Will's, the Men of Wit". (p. 441)

Defoe presents the depraved taste of the modern age in images of appetite and disease:

> The World has lost its ancient Taste of Wit,
> And Vice comes in to raise the Appetite;
> For Wit has lately got the start of Sence,
> And serves it self as well with Impudence.
> Let him whose Fate it is to write for Bread,
> Keep this one Maxim always in his Head;
> If in this Age he wou'd expect to please,
> He must not cure, but norish their Disease;
> Dull Moral things will never pass for Wit,
> Some Years ago they might, but now 'tis too late.
> Vertue's the faint Green-sickness of the Times,
> 'Tis luscious Vice gives Spirit to all our Rhimes. (p. 443)

The language echoes Oldham's, and the tone is equally Juvenalian. Defoe, like Oldham, and like the Augustans, is doubtful about man's perfectibility. He does not share the easy optimism of the moderns, whether they be Reformers of Manners, or Men of Sense such as Sir Richard Blackmore, who argued in A Satyr against Wit that "Satyr - Writers" should be suppressed (l. 352).[82] His moral stance is more unimpeachable than Oldham's, and unlike some of the hack writers whom he rose above, he remained true to his principles in spite of the persecution he suffered for them.

In the Conclusion Defoe summarises the reasons why the Reformers have only scratched the surface in their war against vice, the main reason being the hypocrisy of those charged to enforce the laws. Reformation must proceed by example, he says. It "Must work upon our Shame and not our Fear". (p. 447) Although it ends with compliments to "Maria" and "her Royal Sister" for espousing virtue, the poem's conclusion is not optimistic, since their "Royal Examples" have proved "useless here". (p. 448)

CONCLUSION

The campaign to reform manners did not, of course, succeed in eradicating vice. For example, in 1694 810,090 gallons of gin were distilled; but by 1734 the figure had risen to 6,074,762 gallons,[1] with the results which Hogarth so graphically depicted in Gin Lane. Guardian Number 21 speaks of a "prevailing Torrent of Vice and Impiety", and there is plenty of other evidence to show that it did not abate until late in the century.[2] Francis Place, surveying dubious literature of the eighteenth century from the seemingly irreproachable moral vantage of the 1820's, finds much to object to as recently as the last two decades of the century.[3] The coffee-houses survived a threat of closure in the early days of reforming zeal, when the loud protests of their habitués won them a reprieve, and went on from strength to strength, encouraging many vices and some virtues.

By the 1720's Ned Ward's History of London Clubs (1700) could have been expanded to include a description of the Duke of Wharton's notorious Hell-Fire Club,[4] which was the first of many with that name. The rakes were at their most active in the 1730's, reaching a nadir in the rapes and swindles of Colonel Francis Charteris.[5] The 1760's would also stand out on a graph of rakery: Sir Francis Dashwood's Monks of Medmenham Abbey involved not only Wilkes, but most of the Government of the day, as well as many other leading political and literary figures. After this the rake's activities decline.[6] By 1780 the extent of the change in sensibility can be

measured by the judgement that Smollett was no longer considered fit for young ladies to read. In the later part of the century the growth of Methodism,[7] and its equivalent among the upper classes, Evangelicism,[8] had a much more lasting effect than the Societies for the Reformation of Manners. The problem of marauding gangs of rakes, such as the Mohocks, was largely to be solved by improved law enforcement and penal reform, which was initiated by Fielding and completed by Peel's formation of an effective police force. The question of literary taste is more complex. It could be argued that the licentiousness of Restoration drama is healthier, certainly less hypocritical, than Victorian pornography, with its heavy emphasis on the birch. As with Tom Brown's criticism of the Reformers, and the law designed to clear London's streets of prostitutes following the Wolfenden Report, the nineteenth century drove vice and pornography underground.

The eighteenth century proved fertile ground for free thought, as well as for libertine behaviour. Deism was one result of the widened bounds of possible discussion when toleration was extended in 1689. Charles Blount's religion of reason, based on Lord Herbert of Cherbury's five principles, was to have far-reaching consequences for eighteenth century theology. It was the very dominance, after the Restoration, of men of wit and fashion as the arbiters of taste that altered the method of religious discussion. Learned subtleties were lost on them, and the simple, direct appeal to reason became the order of the day in religious questions, as in

science. The first important deistic work, Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious (1696), was presented as a nuisance to the grand jury of Middlesex.[9] Perhaps it was this which prompted Anthony Collins to quote Shaftesbury's Characteristicks as one of the epigraphs to A Discourse of Freethinking (1713): "Fain would they confound Licentiousness in Morals with Liberty in Thought, and make the Libertine resemble his direct Opposite". This confusion on the part of their enemies was the bane of free-thinkers. They are caricatured as iconoclastic hedonists in Free-thinkers, A Poem in Dialogue (1711) (pp. 20-1), by either Jane Barker or Anne Finch, and even as late as 1784 in The Libertines, and about the same time in Libertine Vices of the Age Exposed. In the first issue of The Free-Thinker, 24 March 1718, Ambrose Philips explains that his purpose is to restore the word "Free-Thinking" to its former glories, "by taking it out of the hands of Libertines".[10] Although The Free-Thinker only appeared for eighteen months, there were other similar publications during the century, and Philips's aims may be said to have been largely realised. The early Freemasons had comparable ideals. Deism itself, however, had died by the latter half of the century. It gave birth to Latitudinarianism in the Church, Unitarianism in Dissent, and an accentuated scepticism on the part of non-believers.[11] Indeed, the scepticism of men such as Hume and Gibbon was regarded as a much more serious threat than deism.[12] But deism had influenced Voltaire, D'Holbach and the philosophes, before it was driven out of nominal Christianity. Later it became a more avowedly rationalistic attack on religion in the materialistic dialectic of writers such as Comte and Marx.

More important than the deists was Pierre Bayle's Historical and Critical Dictionary (1697), translated into English in 1710, which is arguably the most influential book of the century. Bayle's scholarship, extremely impressive in its own right, is made the guise for subversive ideas: it is in the notes that the fun lies.[13] Mandeville, who specifically acknowledges his debt to Bayle[14] in the Preface to Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church and National Happiness (1720) (and it is evident throughout his works), employs a similar device in his Remarks in The Fable of the Bees, which had passed unnoticed in its unadorned form, The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves Turn'd Honest (1705). The Fable was at the centre of the most famous and lasting controversy of the century.

A contemporary account says of Mandeville that he had learned from Montaigne and Bayle particularly, and that he believed himself capable of becoming the British Bayle.[15] Bishop Warburton, following a distinction which had become a commonplace after Bayle, (as, for example in Philips's distinction between the two kinds of atheists, in The Free-Thinker No. 22, and Mandeville's own differentiation between professed and speculative atheists in his Free Thoughts, pp. 4-7), divides the "various kinds or rather degrees of LIBERTINISM" into two groups. We have already seen how Bayle argued in the case of Vanini that atheists could have morality, and this was the gist of Philips's argument too. Warburton instances "The famous M. BAYLE" as one of those who, "though they own Morality to be necessary, yet deny Religion to be necessary". The second group deny that even morality, let alone religion, is necessary. The

"execrable doctrine" of The Fable of the Bees, he says, "pretended to prove that MORALITY was so far from being necessary to Society, that it was vice and not virtue which rendered states flourishing and happy".[16] The argument over Mandeville's book raged loud and long, and it cannot be easily summarised. Suffice it to say that few remained unaffected by its arguments. Doctor Johnson acknowledged that Mandeville "opened his views into real life very much".[17]

Voltaire was in England at the height of the controversy surrounding the Fable, and it influenced his own treatment of the theme of luxury in Le Mondain. Thus libertine ideas, which had been largely imported from France in the seventeenth century, were metamorphosed and exported back again in the eighteenth. In each case there were native elements, and in each case there were cross-cultural, international figures. Two of these were Bayle and St. Evremond. The latter's exposition of Epicureanism, the practical morality of the libertine philosophy, in Sur les Plaisirs, Jugement sur Sénèque, Au Comte d'Olonne, A Mlle de Lenclos and A la duchesse de Mazarin, became Voltaire's also after 1736.[18]

The theatre became less vital in the eighteenth century, but naturally libertine ideas and themes appear instead in the expanding new genre, the novel. By far the most extensive treatment is Clarissa. Lovelace, almost as thorough a libertine as any in Restoration drama, was based on Lothario in Rowe's Fair Penitent.[19] Whatever one thinks of the morality of Clarissa, the book had a great influence on many French novelists, who treated the sexual

aspects much more explicitly than Richardson - notably Restif de la Bretonne in Le Paysan perverti (1776).[20] Fiction thus presents another aspect of the reversal of the direction of the influence between France and England, as compared to the preceding century. But perhaps such a statement begs the question of how one defines libertinism in eighteenth century fiction. Sade himself was only prepared to label about three novels prior to his own as libertine, the rest being appropriate to cafés and brothels, but unworthy of discussion in terms of the seriousness of purpose he considers essential to the genre. It has been stated that: "There has not been any systematic treatment or attempt at a definition of 18th-century libertinism in France" comparable to that of Pintard and Lachèvre for the seventeenth.[21] How much more is this true of eighteenth (and for that matter seventeenth) century libertinism in England.

However, we are now at least in a position to draw a few conclusions about some aspects of seventeenth century libertinism, however tentative. At the same time as many of the lower classes erupted into a course of libertine behaviour which has never been rivalled before or since, the upper classes, who were allowed to swear freely if they were so inclined, since such behaviour posed no threat to the State, cultivated retirement. The Royalists made a virtue out of necessity. Their cultivation of the garden had other classical antecedents, but it coincided in particular with a scholarly revival of interest in Epicurus, which mingled with enthusiastic celebrations of the garden in beatus ille poems by Vaughan, Marvell and others. Nevertheless, it was middle-class

values which triumphed, first over the Ranters, and later over the reaction to puritanism which comprised the excesses encouraged by Charless II's Court. The radical implications of the Levellers, Diggers and Ranters could never be acceptable to men like Cromwell, who were themselves substantial landowners. By the end of the century the moneyed interests, typified in the growing mania for speculation, were starting to prevail, after what might be described as a bacchanalian interlude, which had provided satirists with plenty of examples of human folly among the aristocrats. When libertinism became a way of life for an influential section of the population after the Restoration, it lost its claim to be a revolutionary ideology. It no longer had the millenarian fervour of the heady days of 1650, and the urbane cynical wit of the rakes was no substitute for this. The carnival was soon over, and disillusionment set in. Most of libertinism's principal adherents were well aware of the ultimate futility of a purely hedonistic code, particularly when it was not tempered by wit or any of the nobler virtues of the ethic. Hence the satirist came to use a distinctively libertine persona to make a more subtly incisive attack on the milieu to which the libertine speaker himself ostensibly belonged. This is demonstrably true of Rochester, Oldham and others. But the satirist, who exposes human folly, can never hope to change human nature, which he does not believe is perfectible. He will therefore always be in a small minority compared to the optimists who hold with the idea of progress. Thus Pope, Swift and Johnson are very much more secure in terms of literary reputation than they were at the time they wrote, when the effusions of "Men of Sense" like Blackmore appeared

to threaten to swamp good taste throughout the land. It is a measure of their success that so many of the enemies they name are remembered only because they are mentioned in their works.

While no-one could claim that Grub-Street hacks like Ward or dilettante satirists like Ames were writers of the first or second ranks, their works are important because they display themes which the major artists employ. Because they are expressed more crudely in their works, they are more apparent, and when we see them handled in this way we are better able to appreciate the subtler allusions to them when we encounter them in a Dryden or a Pope; or in a writer of the second rank such as Butler, who is the one I believe could most profitably be illuminated by a study from the point of view of libertine ideas. I hope that this research will go some way towards giving the reader this more heightened appreciation.

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37 Ibid., pp. 328-9. This extract is translated by Oscar Mandel, The Theatre of Don Juan (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1963), p. 167.

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64 Rochester: the Critical Heritage, ed. David Farley-Hills, p. 102. Most of the works occasioned by Rochester's death can be found in this useful collection, and where this is the case I supply the page references to it in the text.

65 Pace George Williamson, "The Restoration Petronius", University of California Chronicle, 29 (1927), 273-80.

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80 Pinto, Sedley, p. 167.

81 H.M.C., Report on the Mss. of the Duke of Buccleugh, II, p. 793.

82 POAS, 6, ed. Frank H. Ellis (Yale, 1970), p. 423.

CHAPTER V

1 Works (1722), II, pp. 269-308. Subsequent page references, given in the text, are to this edition, which I have found the most convenient one. I have amended some of its faults, such as over-heavy punctuation, by reference to the earliest editions, and to Oldham's notebook.

2 Gilbert Burnet, Some Passages of the Life and Death of John Earl of Rochester, in Rochester: the Critical Heritage, ed. Farley-Hills, p. 51.

3 H.M.C. Laing Mss. i 405; George Scott in London, to James Scott in Edinburgh; cited in The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, ed. H.M. Margoliouth (revise Legouis: Oxford, 1971), I, p. 409, note on The Statue at Charing Cross:

> For a Diall the place is too unsecure
> Since the privy garden could not it defend, ... (ll. 9-10).

4 Brief Lives, ed. Andrew Clark, II, p. 34.

5 Bodleian Ms. Rawlinson Poet. 123 p. 2.

6 British Museum Additional Ms. 14047.

7 A Satyr against Vertue (1679), p. 3.

8 Athenae Oxonienses, ed. Bliss (1813), IV, p. 121.

9 I remain unconvinced by an alternative account of the visit, based on the authority of a contemporary manuscript in the possession of James M. Osborn of Yale University: D.M. Vieth, "John Oldham, the Wits, and A Satyr against Vertue, PQ, 33 (1963), 90-3.

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11 E.g. pp. 90, 225.

12 Rodney M. Baine, "Rochester or Fishbourne: A Question of Authorship", RES, 22 (1946), 201-6, argues (unconvincingly) for Fishbourne as the probable author.

13 Rochester, Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery, ed. L.S.A.M. von Römer (Paris, 1905), p. 4.

14 POAS, 4, p. 191.

15 For example, in Sodom the curtain rises on "an Antechamber hung round with Aretine's Postures" (1905 ed., p. 9); cf. also Rochester's mock mountebank bill (Collected Works, ed. Hayward, p. 157), Richard Flecknoe, Characters, p. 34, The Character of a Town Gallant (1675), p. 2, and Oldham's Satire III. Upon the Jesuits, l. 423.

16 The Diary of Samuel Pepys, ed. Henry B. Wheatley, VII (1896), 13 January 1668, p. 279.

17 Bodleian Ms. Rawlinson Poet. 123, p. 88.

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19 Sodom (Paris, 1905), p. 9.

20 Wallace Graves, "The Uses of Rhetoric in the Nadir of English Morals", Western Speech, 28 (1964), 97-105.

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22 For example, A Dithyrambique, Satyr against Vertue, Satire III. Upon the Jesuits and The Dream.

23 It was printed in the introduction to the 1905 edition of Sodom, and in The Penguin Book of Restoration Verse, ed. Harold Love (1968), pp. 306-8.

24 BM. Harleian Ms. 7319, f.10^{r}.

25 Penguin Book of Restoration Verse, p. 307.

26 Bodl. Ms. Rawl. Poet. 123, p. 272.

27 Poems of John Oldham (1960), p. 19.

28 George Puttenham, The Art of English Poesie (1588), ed. Gladys Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936, 1970), pp. 57-8.

29 The Poems of John Donne, ed. Grierson, pp. 37-8.

30 POAS, 2, ed. E.F. Mengel (Yale, 1965), p. 19. This is the most convenient edition of the Satires, and it is the one to which page and line references in my text refer.

31 "Batter my heart, three person'd God .../... ravish me"; and "Show me deare Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear." (Poems, ed. Grierson, pp. 299, 301).

32 Harold F. Brooks, "The Works of John Oldham" (unpublished Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1939), p. cxvi. Brooks also notes Oldham's indebtedness to specific plays (p. cxvii).

33 Louis I. Bredvold, The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1934, 1956), Chapters IV and V.

34 Especially An Ugly Old Woman (1678), in Buckingham's Works (1704); cf. also Cleveland, Character of a London-Diurnal (1647) and Character of a Diurnal-Maker (1655); as well as A Pilfering Taylor (1675), A Quack Doctor (1676), and some of those discussed later in this Chapter, pp. 300 ff. below.

35 Bodl. Ms. Rawl. Poet. 123, p. 206.

36 The Poems of Sir George Etherege (Princeton, 1963), p. 103.

37 Abraham Cowley, The Praise of Pindar (stanza 1, note 1), Poems, ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge, 1905), p. 180.

38 Poems, ed. Waller, p. 86.

39 Samuel Butler, Characters, ed. Daves, pp. 162-3.

40 Robert Gould, Poems Chiefly consisting of Satyrs (1689), p. 267.

41 The Right Honourable the E of D[o]rs[e]t's Opinion of the Whigs and Tories, in Buckingham, Miscellaneous Works (1705), II, Part 2, pp. 14-15; assigned to Dorset also in BM. Harleian Ms. 7319, f.103^{v} and BM. Add. Ms. 22, 640, f.113^{v}; reprinted by Brice Harris, Charles Sackville, p. 81.

42 Bodl. Ms. Rawl. Poet. 123, pp. 228, 230.

43 Cowley, On the Death of Mr. Crashaw, Poems, ed. Waller, p. 49.

44 BM. Harleian Ms. 7319.

45 The Works of Sir John Suckling: the Non-Dramatic Works, ed. Thomas Clayton (Oxford, 1971), p. 37. Oldham probably saw it, with Waller's reply, and Henry Bold's in Fragmenta Aurea (1646, 1648). See Clayton, pp. 181-5, 243.

46 Steven Marcus, The Other Victorians (1966), Chapter 7 and passim.

47 Bodleian Ms. Ballard XX. 23, pp. 26ff. It was printed in Seward, Supplement of the Anecdotes of some Distinguished Persons (1797), V, pp. 91ff.

48 Some exception might be made for the Twickenham edition of Pope, which notes some borrowings; and for Rachel Trickett, The Honest Muse (Oxford, 1967), which includes a discussion of Oldham's satiric personality (pp. 90-105), and his influence on Pope in general. Harold F. Brooks, "The Poems of John Oldham", Restoration Literature, ed. Love (1972), pp. 177-203, adds Roger Sharrock, "Modes of Satire", Restoration Theatre, ed. J.R. Brown and B. Harris (1965). The facts of Brooks's essay are documented in a revised reprint (Liechtenstein, 1969) of his "Bibliography of John Oldham", Oxford Bibliographical Society Proceedings and Papers, V (1936), 1-38. In the continued absence of Professor Brooks's long-awaited edition of Oldham (which is still by no means imminent), I have found his D. Phil. thesis, "The Works of John Oldham" (Oxford, 1939) very helpful. There he discusses Oldham's influence on Pope (esp. p. ciii).

49 In his note on Pope's Essay on Man, II, lines 105-8 (Twickenham ed., III-I, pp. 67-8), Maynard Mack cites St. Evremond, Montaigne, Senault and others to show that the analogy between passions and winds was "a commonplace in moral writings". Bonamy Dobrée quotes Bacon in addition (Everyman ed.)

50 Cowley, The Garden, Essays, ed. Waller, p. 420.

51 Dryden, Poems, ed. Kinsley, p. 389.

52 This copy is in the British Library: BM. c.45.a.1.

53 Harold F. Brooks, "The Poems of John Oldham", Restoration Literature, ed. Love, 1972; but much more fully in his thesis, pp. cxxii-cxlv.

54 Richard Flecknoe, A Collection of the choicest Epigrams and Characters (1673), p. 34.

55 As he is called in the anonymous Search after Wit (1691), Dedication, f.A2^{v}, whose title is derived from Ames's Search after Claret. There is no collected edition of Ames's works, and few of them were ever reprinted. However, his canon is largely established in The Bacchanalian Sessions (1693), p. 24.

56 POAS, 5, ed. William J. Cameron (Yale, 1971), p. 1.

57 "Philosarchus" [pseud. for Daniel MacLauchlan], An Essay upon Improving and Adding, to the Strength of Great-Britain and Ireland, by Fornication, Justifying The same from Scripture and Reason (1735). MacLauchlan, besides being a pamphleteer who must have surpassed Swift's wildest fantasies, sounds like an eighteenth century equivalent of Coppe or Clarkson. Called to the ministry of Ardnamurchan in Scotland in May 1733, he was soon accused of intemperate drinking, swearing and singing bawdy songs, although these charges were found not proven. He was imprisoned on suspicion of having written the Essay, and excommunicated. Like many of the Ranters, he spent the last period of his life in obscurity, dying in Jamaica about 1745 (Peter Fryer, introduction to Venus Unmasked (1967), p. 10). Allan Ramsay, in his Address of Thanks from the Society of Rakes, to the Pious Author of An Essay ... (Edinburgh, 1735) drily satirises both the "young clergyman" and those to whom he had given offence. That MacLaughlan's was not an isolated case is shown by the fact that Patrick Delany, Swift's friend, felt the need to publish a 200 page refutation of polygamy entitled Reflections upon Polygamy and the encouragement given to that practice in the Scriptures of the Old Testament (1737), in which he called it "a doctrine daily defended in common conversation and often in print by a great variety of plausible arguments". (Harleian Miscellany, II (1809), p. 294f). Delany's book, under the pseudonym of "Phileleutherus Dubliniensis" (echoing the nom-de-plume of Leyser, a well-known advocate of polygamy) was a best-seller (John Cairncross, After Polygamy was made a Sin (1974), p. 141).

58 Edward Ward, The Libertines: or, The Vices of the Age Expos'd (5th ed.; 1709), p. 64.

59 D.F. Foxon, "Libertine Literature in England, 1660-1745", The Book Collector, Spring, Summer, Autumn 1963, p. 303 (revised reprint (1964), p. 50. The peculiar historical connection between political upheaval and erotic literature is argued (but again tantalisingly briefly) by Gershon Legman, The Horn Book: Studies in Erotic Folklore and Bibliography (New York, 1964), pp. 60-1.

60 John Atkins, Sex in Literature (1970; Panther ed., 1972), p. 348.

61 H.W. Troyer, Ned Ward of Grub Street (Cambridge, Mass., 1946) pp. 169ff.

62 Benjamin Boyce, Tom Brown of Facetious Memory (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), p. 68. The nearest we have is still the unimaginative "Age of Dryden".

63 Works (5th ed.; 1720), IV, p. 63. Unless acknowledged otherwise, all references are to this four volume edition.

64 Maren-Sofie Røstvig, The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphosis of a Classical Ideal, Vol. II, 1700-1760 (Oslo, 1958), pp. 7-29. Cf. also H.N. Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry, Vol. I, 1700-1740 (New York, 1939); E.M.W. Tillyard.

65 The Diary of John Evelyn, ed. de Beer (1959), p. 792.

66 History of His Own Time, I (1724), p. 624.

67 Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J.E. Springarn (Oxford, 1908), I, p. lxxxv.

68 John Stowe, A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster, ed. John Strype (1720), II, Book 5, p. 30.

69 [Josiah Woodward], An Account of the Progress of the Reformation of Manners (1701), p. 31.

70 An Account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners (1699), p. 22.

71 Stowe, Survey, ed. Strype, p. 31.

72 Ibid.

73 POAS, 6 (1970), p. 446. Subsequent page references are in the text.

74 Peter Fryer, Mrs. Grundy, Studies in English Prudery (1963), p. 103. Defoe's satire is the only serious omission I have noted in Fryer's exhaustive bibliography of the subject (pp. 332-40).

75 A Bibliography of Royal Proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns, ed. Robert Steele, (Oxford, 1910), Nos. 4076, 4246, 4269, 4314, 4354.

76 9 & 10 William III c. 32 (POAS, 6, pp. 130-1).

77 An Account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners (1699), Appendix

78 Stowe, Survey, p. 31.

79 Brown, Letters from the Dead to the Living (2nd ed.; 1702), pp. 71, 73.

80 Table Talk, Works (1720), I, pp. 157, 162.

81 POAS, 6, p. 400.

82 POAS, 6, p. 152.

CONCLUSION

1 POAS, 6, p. 429.

2 A.R. Humphreys, The Augustan World (1954), p. 158.

3 BM. Add. Ms. 27825, Place Papers, Vol. 37, especially pp. 118ff; BM. Add. Ms. 27826, Place Papers, Vol. 38, pp. 224-5.

4 Mist's Weekly Journal, 20 February 1720, pp. 380-1.

5 E. Beresford Chancellor, The Lives of the Rakes Vol. III : Col. Charteris and the Duke of Wharton (1925).

6 Louis C. Jones, The Clubs of the Georgian Rakes (New York, 1942), p. 8.

7 E.D. Bebb, Nonconformity and Social and Economic Life, 1660-1800 (1935), p. 43.

8 Richard A. Soloway, "The Crisis of English Faith and Morals during the French Revolution", Anglican Theological Review, 42 (1960), p. 300.

9 G.R. Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 137-40.

10 The Free-Thinker, ed. Ambrose Philips (1733), I, p.2.

11 I.W.J. Machin, "Popular Religious Works of the Eighteenth Century - their Vogue and Influence" (Ph. D., London, 1939), pp. 157-8.

12 A.R. Humphreys, The Augustan World, p. 162.

13 For Laurence Sterne's interest in this aspect of Bayle, see Francis Doherty, "Bayle and Tristram Shandy: "Stage-Loads of Chymical Nostrums and Peripatetic Lumber", Neophilologus, 58 (1974), 339-48.

14 Bernard Mandeville, Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness (2nd ed., 1729), p. xix.

15 Bibliotèque anglaise (1725), XIII, p. 124, quoted by André Morize, L'Apologie du luxe au XVIIIe siècle et "le Mondain" de Voltaire (Paris, 1909), p. 79.

16 Warburton, The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated, Works, ed. Hurd (1788), III, pp. 474-5. Cf also I, p. 454.

17 Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. R.W. Chapman (1970), p. 948. Cf. Earl Miner, "Dr. Johnson, Mandeville and 'Publick Benefits'", HLQ, 21 (1958), 159-66.

18 André Morize, L'Apologie du luxe, pp. 35-42.

19 Allardyce Nicoll, A History of English Drama, 1660-1900 (4th ed., Cambridge, 1965), p. 201.

20 Barry Ivker, "On the darker side of the Enlightenment: a comparison of the literary techniques of Sade and Restif", Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 79 (1971), pp. 212-3. Cf. R. Nicklaus, "Crébillon Fils et Richardson", Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 89 (1972), 1169-85.

21 Barry Ivker, "Towards a definition of libertinism in 18th century French fiction", Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 73 (1969), pp. 221-2. See also D.A.F. Sade, "Notes on the Novel", extracts from Idée sur le roman, Yale French Studies, 35 (1965), 12-20, especially pp. 12-13.

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